
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

GoogleTM books

<http://books.google.com>





Mrs. A. Connor

The gift of the
Rev. Doctor Fletcher —

3127. ccc 4.3.

ON THE
USE OF THE BIBLE.

.....
Salisbury de la Roche
THE LETTER OF FÉNÉLON

TO THE
BISHOP OF ARRAS.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS,
BY
THE REV. JOHN FLETCHER, D.D.

.....
LONDON:
SOLD BY BOOKER, NEW BOND STREET;
AND
KEATING, DUKE STREET.
1837.



PRINTED BY A. J. VALPY,
RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET.

DEDICATION.

TO THE

HONOURABLE, AND REVEREND, GEORGE SPENCER.

Honoured, and Reverend, Sir,

In presenting to the public the Translation of the Letter of Fénelon, I know no one, to whom I can more appropriately inscribe it, than to one, who possesses so many of those amiable virtues, which adorned the heart, and mind, of that illustrious Prelate. The tribute, too, is so much the more properly due to you, as the subject of that letter is the *Bible*;—the subject, to which, beyond every other, you have devoted your great talents;—which has long formed the chief object of your studies, and meditations;—and in which, therefore, your learning is eminently distinguished. It is, accordingly, for these reasons, as well as to testify the sincere regard, and admiration, which I entertain for the many Christian, and exalted, features which mark your character, that I feel great satisfaction in thus dedicating to you, both the succeeding Translation, and the Illustrations, which I have appended to it.

JOHN FLETCHER.

P R E F A C E.

THE Letter of Fénelon was occasioned by the following circumstances :—The fanaticism, and zeal, of the early advocates of the Reformation had profusely circulated *their* translations of the Bible among the public,—forcing these into the hands of the Catholics; and persuading them, that the sacred volume is, not only the sole record of Christian faith, but that it is, moreover, the privilege of every Christian to interpret it, according to the dictates of his own private judgment. It was owing to these, and to such like artful assurances, that multitudes in the Low Countries, seduced from their old religion, became Protestants. The consequence was, that soon, confusion, and disorder began to prevail, where all, until now, had been unity, and peace. Alarmed, therefore, at these evils, and fearing lest these provinces should, in imitation of Holland, throw off the yoke, both of Catholicity, and of submission to the civil power,—the Church, as well as the State, interposed,—the former, in order to preserve, if possible, the integrity of faith; the latter, to check the growth of insubordination. Accordingly, it was judged proper to adopt, for these purposes, some of those restrictions respecting the reading of the Bible, which had

been suggested by the Council of Trent, in that instrument, denominated "*The Index*." These regulations were, indeed, adopted, and enforced with greater strictness, perhaps, in the Low Countries,—in consequence of their proximity to the revolted provinces of Holland,—than in any other Catholic state in Europe. They were imposed upon the diocese of Arras, as well as upon that of Cambray. It was from the effects of certain difficulties, therefore, which they seem to have created, that the pious Bishop of the former diocese addressed himself to his friend, and metropolitan, Fénelon,—requesting him to state his sentiments upon the subject of allowing the laity to read the Bible in the vulgar languages.

The reply of Fénelon, full of learning and good sense, is briefly to the following effect:—He states, in the first place, what, during the early ages of the Church, was the character of its discipline, in relation to the general use of the Holy Scriptures. He shows, that, although the Church was wont then to allow, and even to encourage, the reading of the sacred volume, yet it did so always, with the most careful circumspection,—requiring, that, ere the faithful did read it, they should already have been prepared for the important task, both by the previous instructions of their pastors, and by the well-ascertained piety of their conduct. Having stated this, he proceeds to express his opinion, respecting the nature of the principles established by the Reformation,—which sanction to every individual the right, not merely to read the Bible, but to interpret, and understand it, accordingly as his own conscience, or judgment, might chance to dictate. This, he observes, is

alike repugnant to reason itself, as it is, to the character of religion. For, the Bible, in a countless multitude of its parts, is so replete with difficulties, that it is *impossible* for the vulgar to understand it,—whilst even, from their endless contradictions, it is equally manifest, that the learned themselves *do not* understand it. A book, therefore, which is so perplexing and obscure,—which is made the grounds, and cited as the proof, of every erroneous doctrine,—such book, observes the enlightened Prelate, could never have been designed by the divine wisdom to be the sole rule of the Christian's faith, or the only guide of his Christian knowledge. Hence, therefore, he infers, that since true faith, and the profession of *one* true religion, are the essential requisites, and conditions of salvation;—so, consequently, there must exist some better, and safer principle, for the secure knowledge, and attainment, of these blessings, than the weak, wavering, dictate of each one's private judgment. Now, such principle, he shows, can be no other than that of *authority*,—the sacred, and *unerring*, tribunal of the Catholic Church:—because it is only such tribunal, that is either competent, or calculated, to protect, or preserve, the unity of faith, or to stay, or correct, the innovations of error;—only such tribunal, that is adapted to prevent, or allay, the uneasinesses, and fears of doubt, or to inspire the believer with confidence and real conviction. Having established these points, the pious Prelate then describes the dispositions, with which men ought to read the Scriptures, in order to derive from them the benefits, which, when properly read, they are sure always to produce. Such is the import, and such the substance of the succeeding letter. Let the Protestant only read it with attention,—with a

mind open to conviction, and a wish to find out the truth;— with these dispositions, he will not fail, at all events, to feel, that there are many facts, and observations in it, which are alike calculated to interest his piety, to improve his learning, and to correct his prejudices.

To the Letter of Fénélon I have appended a few Illustrations. But these, for the most part, are only a series of plain, and obvious, reasonings, addressed to the good sense of the candid, and pious reader, rather than to the learning of the supercilious critic. They are, some of them, those same easy, but interesting, reflections, which I have repeatedly suggested in several other publications.

LETTER, &c.

MY LORD,

As you have signified to me your wish to know my sentiments, respecting the propriety of the laity reading the Bible, I will endeavour to state these, with all that veneration and deference, which you so justly merit.

I. It is my opinion, then, that many writers have given themselves a very needless degree of trouble to prove, what cannot be called in question,—namely, that the laity were wont to read the Bible, during the first ages of the Church. To be convinced of this, we need only to consult the works of Saint Chrysostom. Thus, he says, for example, in his preface to the Epistle to the Romans,—that “*he bitterly regrets, that many of the faithful do not understand St. Paul, as they should do; and that the ignorance of some is so great, as not even to know the number of his Epistles.*” “*The reason of this disorder,*” he adds, “*arises from the circumstance of their not assiduously reading the writings of the apostle.*” He, moreover, states, that “*the ignorance of the Holy Scriptures is the source, both of the contagion of heresies, and of the corruption of morals. They,*” he says, “*who turn not their eyes to the rays of the Scriptures, fall necessarily into errors, and into the commission of frequent faults.*”—These reproaches were addressed to the laity, who attended the sermons of the Saint.

Saint Jerome, instructing Læta respecting the education of

A

her daughter, tells her, that "*soon as the child is a somewhat older, her parents should find her constantly employed in the sanctuary of the Scriptures, consulting there the prophets, and the apostles, concerning her spiritual nuptials. Let her,*" he adds, "*bring back to you, each day, the fruits of her regular work, which will be a collection of flowers, culled from the Scriptures. Let her learn, first, a certain number of the Greek verses; and then instruct herself by the Latin version. Teach her,*" he says, "*to love the sacred books in preference to precious stones and robes of silk. Let her learn by heart the Psalms. Let her know the Proverbs of Solomon, relating to the rules of life. Let her, from the Ecclesiast, be engaged to trample under foot the vanity of worldly things; and from the book of Job, to imitate the examples of courage and resignation. From these instructive lessons, let her proceed to the Gospels; and let these be constantly in her hands. Inspire her with an ardent thirst for the Acts of the Apostles, and for their Epistles. Make her learn by heart the Prophecies; the seven first Books of the Scripture; those of Kings; and the Chronicles, along with those of Esdras, and Esther. Last of all, and when the thing can be done without danger, let her read the Canticle of Canticles. This precaution is necessary, lest, reading it too early, she might not, under its carnal expressions, comprehend the mystery of the spiritual nuptials with the sacred Spouse; and the tenderness of her innocence might, thus, possibly be wounded.*"

In thus laying down the above plan of education, St. Jerome does not pretend to violate the established discipline of the Church, at that period. On the contrary, he but followed the general practice, which then prevailed in the method of instructing young Christian females. Now, if the Saint thus required, that a child, so young as Læta, should not only know, but even learn by heart, so many portions of the Scriptures,—what ought we not, of course, to infer, with regard to men of mature age, and of women of tried discretion and distinguished piety? Moreover, in those times, both the Scriptures, and the Liturgies of the respective churches, were written, and used, in the vulgar languages. Thus, in the West, men, all, understood the Latin, in which they possessed the ancient version of

the Bible, denominated by St. Austin "the old Italic." In like manner, they enjoyed, also, the Liturgy in the same language, which was again the language of the people.—In regard of the East, it was, likewise here, the same thing:—The public here, all, spoke Greek: they understood the version of the Septuagint, and the Greek Liturgy,—just as now we understand our modern translations. Wherefore, without entering into any critical discussions, nothing is more manifest, than the following facts,—that the Christian public possessed, each, in their own languages, both the Bible, and their Liturgies,—which, for their pious education, the very children were made to read;—that the holy pastors of each church were wont, in their sermons, to explain regularly, and in order, the entire books of the Scriptures;—that the sacred text was familiar to the people;—that they were continually exhorted to read the holy volume, and blamed,—if negligent,—for the omission;—in short, that the Church, and its pastors, considered the neglect of the Scriptures, both as a source of heresies, and as a cause of the relaxation of piety and morals. The evidence of all this is incontestable, because it is clearly attested by the monuments of antiquity.

II. On the other hand, my Lord, it cannot be denied, that,—whilst the Church acted thus, in relation to the great body of the faithful,—she was, at the same time, peculiarly careful not to intrust the sacred volume to the hands of those, of whose faith and piety she was not, as yet, completely satisfied. Thus, in regard of the Catechumens, she employed the nicest care, and prudence, to discover to them, only by slow degrees, the mysteries of faith; and the form, and nature, of the holy sacraments. Thus, also, conducted by the same spirit, she regulated her discipline, in relation to her Neophytes; and to such young individuals, who, as yet, were deemed tender in their faith,—permitting these to read the Scriptures, only in proportion to their supposed necessities, and dispositions. The Jews had already given the example of this necessary discipline: for they never allowed the reading of the beginning of Genesis; of certain parts of Ezechiel; and of the Canticle of Canticles, before men had attained the age of maturity and discretion. We have, indeed, just seen, that St. Jerome ob-

served the same method, or economy, in regard of the young Læta, prescribing, at first, certain books ; and, ere long, certain others ; and, last of all, the Canticle of Canticles,—because *the carnal expressions*, under which the mystery of the sacred nuptials of the soul with the divine Spouse is concealed, might possibly wound the delicacy of her heart, had they been confided to her before she had made a certain degree of progress in the simplicity of faith, and in the attainment of the interior virtues. Thus, on one side, the Scriptures were given to all the faithful. On the other, they were given to individuals, in proportion only to their respective wants ; to the measure of their progress ; and to the degree of their acquirements.

III. It would be a dangerous opinion, and a prejudice, too nearly approaching to that of the Protestants, to imagine, that the Christian may not be solidly instructed in all the truths of religion, although he has never read the Scriptures at all. Saint Irenæus was far from entertaining such opinion, when he says:—“ *What if the apostles had not even left us the Scriptures,—should we not, in this case, have been bound to follow the order of that tradition, which they have deposited in the hands of those, to whose care they have confided the government of the churches? There are many barbarous nations, that have received the faith in Jesus Christ, and that have followed this order,—preserving, without letters, or ink, the truths of salvation, written in their hearts by the Holy Ghost ; observing carefully the ancient tradition ; and believing, through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in one only God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things contained therein. . . . These men, who have embraced this faith, without the help of any letters, are barbarians, in relation to our language ; but in respect to doctrine, practices, and morals,—in respect to FAITH, they are thoroughly wise, and pleasing to God,—leading lives of perfect justice, chastity, and virtue. Hence, then, should any one, speaking to them in their own native language, propose to them the dogmas, invented by the heretics,—straight, they would stop their ears, and fly far away,—not bearing to listen to a discourse so replete with blasphemy. Thus, being supported by the ancient tradition of the apostles,*

they refuse to admit even into their simple thoughts the slightest image of those monsters of error."

From these words of this great doctor of the Church,—and who was nearly a cotemporary of the apostles,—we see, that, in his time, there were, among the barbarous nations, a numberless body of faithful believers, who were highly spiritual, and perfect; and, as St. Paul says, "*rich in all word and in all science,*" although, yet, they had never read the sacred books. It is not that this circumstance diminishes, in the slenderest degree, the value of the holy volumes; neither ought it, any way, to lessen the zeal of the Christian public to nourish their minds with the heavenly food,—conducted, meanwhile, by an humble dependence upon the Church. But, in short, this fact is clear,—evinced by the most positive, and satisfactory testimonies,—that tradition alone, without the use of the Scriptures, sufficed to establish the faith, and to form the morals, of countless multitudes of the faithful;—and this, too, in a degree the most perfect and sublime. The Church, which has given the sacred books to us,—has *to them*, without these holy records, communicated, by her living word, all those same doctrines, and instructions, which we derive from the sacred text. That *unwritten* word, which is in the mouth of the Spouse of the Son of God, supplied for the absence of the written word; and administered to the mind the same interior nourishment. Hence it was, that those pious individuals, being thus enlightened, would, as St. Irenæus remarks, have stopped their ears at the first sound of any erroneous, or contagious, doctrine. Strong in the simplicity of faith, and humbly docile to the voice of the Church,—they, in these happy dispositions, had the discernment to reject, and the delicacy to shun, every artifice, however subtle, of the authors of innovation. Wherefore, as the same Saint observes, it would be a very erroneous notion to suppose, that the Church cannot conduct her children to perfection, both in regard of faith and morals, without the use, or reading, of the Bible.

What St. Irenæus has attested respecting the faithful in his times, St. Austin has equally stated concerning the solitaries, in his days. "*A man,*" says the Saint, "*supported by faith, hope, and charity, does not stand in need of the Scriptures,*

unless it be for the sake of instructing others. It is thus that many solitaries live in the deserts with these three virtues, without the use of any of the sacred books.—Thus we see the hermits themselves, in their deserts, sanctified by the fervour of their prayers; and, without any aid from the Scriptures, arriving at the highest state of spiritual contemplation. We read even, that one of these holy recluses went so far as to sell the sacred volume, by which he had been instructed “to sell all,” in order to give himself up entirely to the spirit of evangelical poverty.

After having considered these, so frequent, examples, can we be otherwise than convinced, that the faithful may attain perfection without reading the Scriptures,—since thus the Church, which teaches them by the spirit of her divine Spouse, becomes to them a living Scripture; and a Scripture, distributed amongst them, in a way, of all others, the best adapted, and proportioned, to their capacities, and wants? It is under the impression of these feelings, that St. Austin says to the faithful: “*Attend to the Scriptures: We are your books.*”—*Intenti estote ad Scripturas: Codices vestri sumus.* Men do indeed read the Scriptures, when they listen to the voice, and instructions, of their pastors, who explain them; and who inculcate, and deliver, to them those parts of the sacred volume, which are adapted to their respective duties, and obligations. Thus, the pastors of the Church are, in fact, the real *living* Scriptures.—Considering these circumstances, no private individual can, with any thing like reason, complain, as if he were debarred from acquiring the knowledge of the truth. For, if so, he must, in such case, not only regard the tradition of the Church, as insufficient,—but he must also prefer his own interpretations of the sacred text to the dictates of her authority,—presumptuously conceiving, that he understands the sense of the divine volume better; and with more unction, and wisdom, than she does. Wherefore, behold, what ought to be the conduct of the faithful, whenever the Church, in her prudence, should deem it necessary to restrict their liberty of reading the Bible, in order, by an equivalent, to impart to them a series of instructions, more accommodated, and measured, to the nature of their present wants:—They ought, on such occasions, to

humble themselves ; and on the assurances of this holy mother, believe, that they sustain no loss. They should rest contented with the simple food of milk, and bread ; receiving, with docility of mind, what the Holy Ghost, the author of the Scriptures, thus dictates, and communicates, to them, as the truths themselves of the Scriptures, without confiding to them the sacred text,—lest by their ignorance, or profane curiosity, they should interpret it amiss. Curiosity, and all presumption, or precipitancy,—under whatsoever alleged pretext of the love of the Word of God, men may seek to justify these evils,—are, in reality, in such cases, but the dictates of pride, and the temptations of independence.

IV. During those happy periods, when the Scriptures were read by multitudes of the faithful, in the manner above described, there were then a variety of causes, which prevented, or checked, the abuse of the sacred volume.

In the first place, the pastors in the different churches were wont to explain incessantly the sacred text, in order to inculcate the sense of tradition ; and to prevent the presumption of private individuals from attempting to interpret it, according to the dictates of their own fancies ; or in a sense repugnant to the sober, and temperate, explanations, affixed to it by the wisdom of the Church.—In the next place, it was the practice of the faithful, whenever any, however slender, difficulty occurred, respecting the meaning of an obscure text, or passage, to consult the learning, and piety, of their pastors.—Thirdly, soon as ever any individual was suspected of any novelty in the interpretation of the sacred text, the bishops at once assembled, and explained away the difficulty.—In short, in order to prevent, or to check, any dissension in the Church, it was the custom, above all in the West, to consult the apostolic see. It was by these means, and by the simplicity of faith, the docility of the public mind, and the authority of the pastoral body, combined with their continual instructions, that the contagion of error, and the diffusion of any dangerous abuse, were effectually prevented, or suppressed. It is true, indeed, that, notwithstanding such precautions, there did sometimes, here and there, rise up a few daring innovators, perverting the sacred text ; and creating very dangerous contests, and dis-

putes. For St. Peter tells us, that, in the Epistles of St. Paul, "*there are some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned, and unstable, wrest,—as they do, also, the other Scriptures,—to their own destruction.*" Even the pious Origen seems sometimes to have carried too far his allegorical interpretations, in order, as St. Jerome expresses it, to exalt his ideas into so many divine mysteries. On the other hand, the Semipelagians complained, although unjustly, that St. Austin explained the Epistle to the Romans in a new sense, and in a way, unheard of in the order of tradition. But, in short, during those ages, the spirit of freedom, and licentiousness, in the interpretation of the sacred pages, had, no where, even remotely approached to the rashness of that criticism, which, in these days, is daily, and every where, shaking the very foundations of Christianity. (A.)

V. It would seem, that the chief causes, which compelled the Church to employ the severe measures of her authority,—restricting the reading of the Scriptures to those individuals only, whom she deemed tolerably prepared to read them with profit,—were the pernicious errors, and the conduct, of the Vaudois and the Albigenses. Not, indeed, that I pretend to declare, that such restraints began, only at the time of these heretics: for, to determine the precise period of the order of this discipline, would require, perhaps, a considerable degree of investigation. However, be this as it may, the fact is certain, that, at the time of the aforesaid innovators, the Church, by a melancholy experience, became sensible, that even the daily bread of life ought not to be given to children; that it became now necessary for their pastors to break it for them; and that this same divine food, which feeds, and supports, the humble, and the docile, becomes a poison to the presumptuous, and the untractable. The Vaudois, or the Poor Men of Lyons, pretended, that they understood the Scriptures far better than their pastors,—whom, also, they undertook to reform, and correct. The Albigenses, in like manner, loudly called upon the people,—animating them to examine the Scriptures, by themselves, independently of the explanations of their pastors,—whom, again, they accused of ignorance, and deception. It was, accordingly, against these, and such like, innovators, that the Pope,—Inno-

cent the Third,—wrote, as follows, to the faithful of the diocese of Metz:—"Our venerable Brother, the Bishop of Metz, has, by his letters, informed us, that, in his diocese, and in his town, a considerable multitude of laymen, and women, excited by the wish to read the Scriptures, had got translated into French the Gospels; the Epistles of St. Paul; the Psalms; the Morals of Job; and several other books;—and that some of the clergy having, herewith, blamed them for the innovation, they openly resisted,—pretending to draw reasons from the Scriptures to prove, that they ought not to be molested for what they were doing. Among them, there are some, who go so far as even disgustingly to despise the simplicity of their priests. And when these propose to them the Word of Salvation, they, in their secret murmurings, say, that they know, better than their priests, how to explain this Word; and that, above all, it is far better explained in their libels. Now, although the desire to understand the Scriptures, and to instruct the public according to the doctrine of these holy books, is, by no means, blameable,—but, on the contrary, praiseworthy;—still, do the aforesaid individuals appear reprehensible in these regards,—that they hold secret assemblies;—that they usurp the ministry of preaching; and that they mock at the simplicity of their priests, &c. . . ." His Holiness adds: "The secret mysteries of faith ought not to be exposed indifferently to ALL; because ALL are not competent to understand them. They should be exposed to such only, as are disposed to receive them with sincerity of heart. It is for this reason, that St. Paul says to the more simple,—I have given you milk to drink, and not solid food, as to little children in Jesus Christ: for, solid food, as the Apostle says, elsewhere, is for those who are grown up. We preach, he adds, the wisdom of God among the perfect; but among you, I have judged, that I knew nothing, save Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ crucified. The depth, in fact, of the divine Scriptures is such, and so great, that, not only the simple, and the ignorant, but the wise, and the learned themselves, are incapable of penetrating them, so as to acquire a complete understanding of them."

That spirit of indocility, and insubordination, which had thus broken out, and prevailed, amongst the laity, is a convincing

proof, how dangerous it was to allow the indiscriminate reading of the sacred text to the public, at times when the pastors of the Church neither possessed the ancient authority of their early predecessors; nor their ancient vigilance, and care, in explaining the holy volume; and when the people, moreover, were taught to condemn their simplicity. Experience, again, made it evident, that the fanaticism of the aforesaid laity was contagious; and that they easily seduced the multitude, by promising them to prove from the Scriptures, that the clergy were a set of ignorant, and artful, impostors,—wholly unworthy of the sacred ministry. Thus, Wycliff, too, and Luther, and Calvin,—and, in fact, all the sectarists of the sixteenth century, perverted, and abused, these words: “*Scrutamini Scripturas.*” (Search the Scriptures.) They reduced the Church to the necessity of restricting the public from the indiscriminate use of the Bible; and from the reading of it, without the permission of their pastors.*

* At the time when Luther began the Reformation, and for some years after, there did not exist any canon, nor any kind of restriction, prohibiting the use, or reading, of the Bible. On the contrary, the Church so far from withholding the sacred volume, or discouraging its use, laboured every where to promote it, and was eager for its circulation. Thus, no sooner had the art of printing begun to prevail,—and long before any Protestant version was known,—there had been printed, and published, a variety of Catholic translations. In Italy alone, there had been published upwards of forty,—and these, moreover, sanctioned by the approval of the Popes, Bishops, Cardinals, &c.

The circumstance, which gave occasion to the alteration of this discipline, was the abuse made of the sacred book by the first Reformers. These men, anxious to gain abettors to their revolution, and to secure followers of their new opinions, perverted, and mistranslated, it, for these purposes, in a great variety of passages; and prodigally circulating these false versions, engaged multitudes of the public to read them. They, moreover, at the same time, loudly, and incessantly, proclaimed, that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the rule of the Christian’s faith; and that the reason of each individual is its sole interpreter. Flattered by these principles, so gratifying to self-love, and the love of liberty,—an immense portion of the public, early, and very ardently, embraced them. They read, judged, and decided for themselves. We know the consequences. Soon, confusion, every where, took place; and error, at once, prevailed, in every shape, that fanaticism, and folly, could devise. It was, ac-

VI. The learned Gerson,—who certainly cannot be accused of having favoured the maxims of the Ultramontanists,—writes, nevertheless, as follows:—“ *It is from this poisoned source, (the alleged right of reading, and interpreting, the Bible) that come forth, and every day increase, the errors of the Be-*

cordingly, under these circumstances, and in this state of things, that the Church, as the guardian of the Scriptures, and of the faithful, deemed it prudent to interfere; and, if possible, to check the growth of the alarming evil. For this purpose, therefore, it issued those regulations, which are denominated “*The Index*.” By these, it was required, that, before the laity indiscriminately should be allowed to read the Bible, they should, first, have applied for the approbation, and have obtained the permission, of their respective pastors, or superiors. Considering, indeed, the temper, and confusion, of the times; the sanctity of the divine book; and how greatly it was, every where, abused;—considering all this, it cannot but be admitted, that, to guard the holy volume, by some kind of regulation, from farther profanation, and abuse, was but an act of pastoral prudence, and Christian piety. Thus, in this country, in consequence of the confusion, and disorders, created by the indiscriminate use of the Bible, there was, early, issued an act of parliament, approved, and sanctioned, by Cranmer himself, restricting the reading of it to such persons only, as were supposed to be competent to understand, and explain, it properly.

In regard, however, of the regulations of the above-mentioned decree,—those of the “*Index*,”—it must be remarked, that they were designed to be *only temporary, and local*,—confined to the time whilst the mischiefs of error were increasing; and limited to such dioceses, as were deemed the most openly exposed to the dangers of contagion. In fact, although admitted in certain dioceses, they were, also, in many dioceses rejected. At present,—now that the fierce spirit of innovation has, comparatively speaking, subsided,—they are rejected every where. They are obsolete things,—a mere dead letter: so that, now, the Catholic Church imposes no more restrictions upon the use, and reading, of the Bible, than do any of the Protestant sects.

If, indeed, since the periods above alluded to,—or even recently,—certain Bulls, or rescripts, have been issued by the Popes, relating to the Bible,—these do not regard the reading itself of the sacred book, but only certain false and corrupted versions of it, which are now in circulation;—and circulated, above all, so prodigally, by the zeal, and bigotry, of the Bible Societies. And, surely, to condemn false versions, and to warn the faithful against them, is no other than an act of enlightened pastoral, and Christian, vigilance: for, the Bible, falsely translated, is no longer the Word of God.

guards; of the Poor Men of Lyons; and of all other innovators, who resemble them. Among all these, there are many laymen, who translate the Bible into the vulgar tongue, to the great prejudice, and scandal, of the Catholic truth."—He, elsewhere, adds:—"The translations of the Scriptures into the vulgar languages,—and, above all, the translation of our Bible, (the French version) ought to be prevented,—save those parts which regard morals, and certain portions of history."—He, still farther, says:—"It is a thing, too replete with danger, to give the Bible, translated into French, to a set of simple, and ignorant men: because by interpreting it wrong, they may fall, at once, into errors. Their duty is, to listen to the Divine Word, delivered to them by the mouth of their preachers: for else, all preaching is in vain." The sentiments of Gerson are founded upon the following reflection:—"Precisely as from a good, and faithful, version of the Bible into French, men might derive a certain share of benefit,—provided they read, and understood, it with sobriety,—so, on the contrary, if the sacred book be ill translated, or presumptuously explained,—rejecting the sense, and interpretations, of the Holy Fathers,—it must, of course, become the source of errors, and of evils, without number."—In reality, such is the case:—We know, by experience, that it is by means of the versions of the Bible, and by the aid of its arbitrary interpretation, that the Protestants have laboured to overturn the fabric of the ancient Church. It was thus,—by this flattering assurance,—that the people were seduced to believe, that they would discover, and clearly behold, the truth, in the pages of the sacred volume.

VII. It was under the apprehension of the aforesaid evils, that the Faculty of Theology in Paris condemned, in the year 1527, certain propositions of Erasmus, who had said, that, "if his opinion were adopted, and followed,—then labourers, masons, and every other class of artisans, should read the Bible; and that, moreover, it ought to be translated into every kind of language." The Faculty, in reply to these propositions, declared,—"that the Vaudois, the Albigenses, and the Turpulins, have demonstrated clearly, how dangerous it is to allow indiscriminately the reading of the Bible in the vulgar languages: for, although such privilege might eventually be of

service to certain individuals,—yet, it would be wrong to concede it indiscreetly, and without reserve, to all persons without distinction.” In regard of the laity, the Faculty again adds:—“*that the Church does not prohibit these from reading certain books of the Scriptures, which might serve for their edification, and the improvement of their morals,—but, having still an explication appended to them, adapted to the measure of their capacities.*”

VIII. The Clergy of the Church of France appear to have followed the same maxims: for, in the letter, which they addressed to the Pope Alexander the Seventh, concerning Voisin’s French translation of the Missal, they say:—“*We have been watchful over this innovation, and have wholly condemned it, as contrary to the discipline of the Church, and as dangerous to the faithful.*” Thus also, in like manner, they cite, and approve of, the censure, which the Faculty of Paris had formerly passed upon the propositions of Erasmus,—remarking, how much the Vaudois, or Poor Men of Lyons, had abused the familiar reading of the Bible; and that it was this—this unrestricted liberty of reading the sacred volume,—that had subsequently given birth to all the sects of the Reformation; and “that, previously, it had opened the way,”—as the Faculty of Paris had remarked in its censure,—“to the errors of the Bohemians.” In short, the Clergy cite the words of St. Vincent, of Lerins, who says, that “*the Scripture,*”—on account of the subtilties, by which men turn its various texts against the authority of the Church,—is called “*the Book of Heretics.*” The Pope Alexander VII., having received the above letter, replied to it, “*by condemning the rashness of those, who, without any authority, had presumed to make, and to place in the hands of all kind of persons, of every state, and sex, the aforesaid French translations.*” (B.)

IX. From the above facts, and considerations, I, therefore, infer, that the Church, without changing any of its fundamental maxims, deemed it, still, necessary to change, in some degree, the order of its conduct in relation to the reading of the Bible. As the Clergy possessed less authority, and were less assiduous in the explanation of the sacred text,—whilst the public, also, were more indocile, and presumptuous,—disposed

to listen with curiosity to every fanatic, and innovator,—so, of course, the Church deemed it an act of prudence to grant fewer facilities; and to employ more precautions, than what she had generally, and at more happy periods, been wont to concede to the faithful. Thus, looking back to the bright ages of Christian piety, we remark, that this same Church permitted the simple laity to carry to their respective homes, or to take with them on their journeys, the holy Eucharist. The reason was,—because her pastors then were assured of the purity of their lives; and of the zeal, and modesty, of their whole conduct: whereas, now, she gives the holy communion, only in her churches; and this, too, with a great deal of watchfulness, and caution. It is not, therefore, the Church, that changes; but the public, who are altered; and by the alteration, rendering necessary a change of her former discipline. Moreover, it is again, true, that, during the first ages, the Church did not allow the reading of the Scriptures, save with a dependence upon the direction of her pastors, who prepared the faithful for the awful task; and who only admitted them to undertake this, in proportion as they found them sufficiently advanced in knowledge, and in piety, to do so with advantage. And even then, as we have seen in St. Jerome, the individual, who was allowed to read the sacred volumes, read only certain books, one after the other; and accordingly as his pastors judged, that it was right; and the proper time, to do so. What, then, the Church has practised, in these times, is simply the fact of more, or less. It is the same order of economy, the same method, and the same dependence. The only difference is, that the Church has augmented her restrictions, and multiplied her precautions, in proportion to the indisposition, and the disorders, of the public. (c.)

X. In regard to our Low Countries,—the condemnation of the translated Bibles there, and the restrictions, imposed upon the laity not to read them indiscriminately, were perhaps more severe than those which were enforced in other countries. The reasons were,—the evils, and the errors, which the Reformers of those parts had every where diffused, in the time of the Duchess of Parma;—the vicinity of Holland;—and the great submission, which, hitherto, those provinces had paid to the

holy see,—motives, which rendered the increase of watchfulness, and precaution, the more necessary. It was hence, that the Council of the province of Cambray, which was held at Mons, in the year 1586, declares, as follows:—“ *No one among the laity shall be at liberty to read the Sacred Scriptures in the vulgar language, in opposition to the fourth Rule of the Index, respecting forbidden books, unless it be by the permission of the Bishops, or their delegates.*”—It was in conformity with this regulation, that my late predecessor, Archbishop De Brias, published, in 1690, a Charge, designed to appease certain disturbances, which had taken place at Mons, concerning this subject of reading the Bible in the vulgar tongue. In this, he speaks as follows:—“ *With all the tenderness of our heart, we implore all those, whom God has committed to our care, to listen with earnest attention, and piety, to the Word of God, delivered to them, whether by the instructions of their catechisms, or by the means of sermons. For, by the aid of these, they may derive those lights, which are necessary to direct their conduct, in a way that is better, and more nearly, proportioned to their weakness, than by their own private reading of the Holy Scripture,—a divine book, unsuited to be placed indifferently in the hands of all orders, and conditions, of the public. It is for this reason, that the Church, as a wise, and charitable, mother, has very properly reserved to herself the power of permitting, or restricting, the reading of it. Neither can any thing be more absurd than the insolence of those men, who represent her as cruel, because she sometimes refuses to her children the food, which they are not able to digest. We, therefore, thus consider ourselves bound in charity to make use of the like precaution in regard of those souls, for which we shall, one day, have to answer before God.*”

XI. From the above considerations, I infer, my Lord, that the Church, in seeming to change a somewhat of her external discipline, has not, in fact, altered, in any respect, her real, and genuine maxims. She has always invariably preserved two of these,—the first, to give the Sacred Scriptures to all those among her children, whom she deemed properly prepared to read them with advantage;—the second, “ *not to cast pearls to swine;*” and, therefore, not to place the divine volume in the

hands of men, who would read, and interpret, it to their ruin. In the early ages of Christian piety, when the faithful were simple, docile, and attached to the instructions of their pastors, she confided it to them, because she was then convinced, that they were solidly instructed, and well prepared to read it with fruit, and edification. But, in these times, seeing, that men are become presumptuous, indocile,—critics, seeking in the Scriptures for arguments against the Scriptures, in order to confirm themselves in their incredulity ;—or else, directing the sacred pages against the pastors of the Church, in order to shake off her authority ;—seeing this, it became but an act of prudence, and necessity, to restrict the reading of the holy volume, which, although so salutary in itself, is thus rendered so dangerous by the use, which the laity, for the most part, have made,—and still make,—of it. My opinion is, that we ought never to separate these two maxims of the Church ;—one of them, to allow the reading of the Scriptures to such only as are already disposed and fitted to read them to advantage ; the other, to labour incessantly to prepare the faithful for the useful task. If you rest easy under the supposition, that the faithful are, all of them, without any *effectual* preparation, already prepared to read them, you, in this case, nourish their curiosity, their presumption, and the rashness of their criticism ;—you feed them,—as we see done, every day,—with the Scriptures themselves. If, on the contrary, you make the supposition, that the faithful are not, as yet, sufficiently fitted for the useful reading,—neglecting, at the same time, to prepare them carefully for it,—you, in this case, deprive them, both of the consolations, and the benefits, which the first Christians were wont to derive from the sacred pages. My conclusion, therefore, is, that it is the duty of the priesthood to endeavour, with assiduous care, to prepare, and dispose, the faithful for the important study ;—that we ought to look upon those alone, as truly instructed, and solidly fixed in Jesus Christ, who have been prudently trained, and fortified, to digest this divine bread of the strong ;—and that, moreover, according to the decisions of the most experienced directors, the surest method of doing this, is to proceed gradually in putting the different books of the sacred code in the hands of the people, according to the

measure of their capacities to understand them, and to their dispositions to revere them,—saying to such as are not, as yet, thus sufficiently prepared :—“ *Non potestis portare modo ; poteritis autem postea.*” (D.)

XII. I once knew an individual, a man of distinguished talents, and enjoying a high degree of reputation in the world, and who,—without having indulged in any of the grosser vices, had still lived in a great forgetfulness of God,—sought, at length, to find consolation in his infirmities, by having recourse to religion. He, however, repeatedly assured me, that the reading of the Bible, so far from yielding him any benefit, had served only to awaken in his mind uneasiness and scandal. The reason, no doubt, of this was his own proud spirit,—presumptuous, and full of certain prejudices, which indisposed him for the otherwise salutary study. The case, however, is, by no means, an uncommon one. There are multitudes, unhappily, who have been, and are now, every where, in the self-same state of indisposition. I have even known men, who, when they were engaged to read such passages of the Scriptures, as the following,—that the serpent spoke to Eve to seduce her ;—that an ass spoke to the Prophet Balaam ;—that Nebuchadnezzar fed upon grass, like the beasts,—were tempted to imagine, that we were amusing them with childish tales. Saint Austin was aware, and sensibly felt it,—that many readers would, at first, be astonished at the number of the wives of the Patriarchs : and he, therefore, thought it necessary to point out in considerable detail the circumstances, and causes, which justified their conduct. We all, in like manner, know, what pains the same holy Father has taken, to prove, that Jacob was not a liar ; and that he had not deceived his Father, in order to deprive his elder brother of the principal blessing. I have known a man of talents, indignant, and scandalised, at the idea of seeing a nation, which boasted of being conducted by the hand of God, going out of Egypt, carrying away with them the riches of the Egyptians ; rebelling in the desert against Moses ;—adoring a golden calf ; and, ere long, making use of their heavenly mission, in seizing upon the lands of the neighbouring people, and murdering them, in order to get possession of their place,—when, meanwhile, they were not

one jot less corrupted, than the latter. With these impressions upon his mind, it became necessary for me to refute minutely, and one by one, all his objections, in order thus to repress his spirit of criticism, and incredulity.—I have, also, known other individuals, who were scandalised at David; because, they observed, he recommended it to his son, when he was actually dying, to take that revenge, which he had not, himself, taken, during his life-time. It must, again, be owned, that the ordinary classes of society,—the ignorant, and the illiterate,—whose reason is not sufficiently disciplined, and subdued to the authority of the sacred books,—are surprised, not unfrequently, at seeing the Prophets commit I know not how many actions, which appear both indecent, and absurd.

It is true,—These extraordinary things, and actions, are mysterious, and extraordinarily inspired. It is true, that they teach us truths, which are profoundly deep. But, here the question is:—Are the generality of men,—men without humility, or virtue,—capable of bearing with such examples? Is it not rather to be feared, that they would abuse them? When men are not accustomed to these deep mysteries, how easy, and natural, it is for them to be astonished to behold Abraham, preparing to sacrifice his only son,—a son, too, whom God had miraculously given to him, with a promise, at the same time, that the posterity of the interesting child should, one day, prove the blessing of the universe? . . . The surprise of such unenlightened individual is, in like manner, perhaps equally great, in seeing Jacob,—prompted by the counsel of his inspired mother,—appearing to act the part of an impostor;—or in seeing Osee, by the command of God, take, for his wife, such a woman, as he did. Where men are incredulous, and corrupted, they wonder, how Job can be proposed to them as a model of patience,—a man who curses the day of his nativity; who boasts of never having deserved the sufferings, which he undergoes; who, in the excess of his anguish,—after rejecting every consolation, suggested to him by his friends, who piously exhorted him to own himself a sinner,—appears even to murmur against God himself. Thus, too, nothing is more difficult to explain, than how Judith,—whom the Holy Ghost proposes to us for our admiration,—could have gone to find out Holofernes.

She tempted him to sin, says the libertine; and she then deceived, and murdered, him.—In the case of the *Canticle of Canticles*, there is not, in the whole series of this book, one single word, either regarding God, or concerning virtue. On the contrary, the letter itself presents nothing but the images of sensual love,—images, which, unless the heart be purified, are calculated to make upon it the most dangerous impressions. It is true, indeed, that, where the eye is enlightened by faith, and the heart has a relish for divine love,—the individual, thus favoured, finds in it a beautiful allegory, expressive of the union of the pure soul with God. But, then, how few are the individuals, who are thus so happily renewed in Jesus Christ, as to enter fully into this mystery of the sacred nuptials of the bride with the heavenly bridegroom?—If we were to stop at the bare letter of the book of the *Ecclesiast*, we might be tempted to imagine, that his reasonings are the arguments of some unbeliever, who considers every thing here, as nought but vanity, because man wholly dies, exactly like the beast.—The books of the *Maccabees* exhibit to us a people, shaking off the yoke of the kings of Syria; and taking up arms, in order to exercise their religion with freedom, rather than suffer martyrdom like the first Christians, who endured every kind of persecution, without ever revolting against their emperors.—A great number of the early Christians, by reading in the *Apocalypse* the account of the reign of a thousand years, fell into the errors of the *Millenarians*: and St. Austin owns, that himself, for a time, was seduced by the false opinions of the moderate *Millenarians*.

It is so, too, with multitudes of Protestants. Misled by prejudices, and bigotry, the number among these is immense, who pitifully believe, that Catholic Rome is still that Babylon, which worships idols,—because its members respect the images, and invoke the prayers, of the Saints. So, too, do they equally believe, that “*She is drunk with the blood of Martyrs*,” because, forsooth, She once persecuted the Reformers!—I have, myself, known persons, who were struck with the splendour of the purple, or the scarlet, of this Babylon; and whom it was difficult to persuade, that, in the aforesaid descriptions, it was the design of St. John to paint Pagan Rome, which, during the

course of three hundred years, persevered in the persecution of the Christian Church.—Wherever men are actuated by prejudices, like the above, they believe, and pretend to prove, from the Epistle to the Romans, that God hates, and damns, the greater part of mankind, without any demerit on their part to determine him to such acts. These same individuals,—half Protestants,—when they read the words—“*God gives, both to will, and to do,*”—at once conclude, that, therefore, He does so by the power of a necessitating grace. In order, indeed, to escape from the term,—“necessitating grace,”—they have recourse to a variety of empty, but artful, subtleties,—alleging, for example, that the will cannot reject such grace, when presented; because it is necessary to follow its delightful, but inevitable, and invincible, impulse.

The Socinians, who, in our days, are become so numerous, and withal so dangerous, employ the Scriptures to show, that Christ Jesus has declared, that He willed not to be considered, as God, save in that same improper, and allegorical, sense, in which it is said to men,—“*You are Gods;*”—and still farther, that He has declared in express terms,—“*My Father is greater than I am.*”—The Protestants pretend to prove from the Epistles to the Romans, and Galatians, as well as from that to the Hebrews, that faith alone, without works, suffices for salvation;—although works, they say, follow from faith.—They pretend to show, from the Epistle to the Hebrews, that, under the new law, there can be but one victim; one sacrifice; and one only offering, which has no need of being, any more, or again, repeated; because it is not like that of the victims of the Jews.—Saint John appears to the Protestants to authorise, in his Epistles, the impeccability of those who are “*the seed of God.*” There are others, who trace in his words the principles of fanaticism, when he says, that “*it is the Spirit, that teaches all things.*” Saint Paul, they add, confirms the same maxim,—declaring, that “*the spiritual man judges of all things, and is judged, himself, by no one.*” (E.)

Where men experience a disposition to incredulity, they are sure to criticise, and quibble, on the apparent contradictions, which are found in the different editions of the Scriptures, in relation to the subject of chronology. They perplex them-

selves, in the like manner, respecting the genealogy of Jesus Christ, which, in one of the Evangelists, is given, they assert, very differently by another. — They are scandalised at our Saviour saying, “ *I go not up to this festival,*” — whilst yet, he, soon after, went there secretly. They say:—He is sometimes frightened; sometimes troubled; that he prays to the Father to deliver him from his passion; and that, in short, He complains, on the cross, that He is forsaken by Him. To all these various objections, they add, that the disciples of Christ are unable to agree amongst themselves;—that St. Paul reproaches Peter to his face; and that he cannot agree with St. Barnaby.

After considering the above difficulties, or objections, it cannot but be owned, that, if any one book of piety, such, for example, as the Following of Christ, the Spiritual Combat, or the Sinner’s Guide, contained one hundredth part of the difficulties, that are found in the Bible, you would consider yourself bound in conscience to forbid its being read in your Lordship’s diocese. Not the excellence of the book would prevent you from concluding, that it would be wrong to place it indifferently in the hands of *all*,—of the profane, the curious, and the ignorant,—because such food, although excellent, would be too powerful for them, and they too feeble to digest it. The Scripture, like Christ Jesus himself, “ *has been given for the ruin, and the resurrection, of many.*” Like Him, “ *it is exposed to the contradiction of multitudes in Israel.*” The self-same word, which is a bread, that nourishes some, is a sword, that pierces the souls of others. It is an odour of life to such as live by faith, and who die to themselves sincerely. It is an odour of death to such as are estranged from the ways of God, and who are wrapped up in themselves, by self-complacency, and pride. To disordered stomachs, the very best food turns to poison. Whosoever seeks for subjects of scandal, —although it be in the Word of God itself,—is sure to find it there, for his ruin. So nicely has the wisdom of God tempered the degrees of light, and shade, in his sacred Word, that all such as are humble, docile, and sincere, find in it only truth, and consolation; whilst such as are presumptuous, and indocile, find nothing in it but error, and incredulity. All those diffi-

culties, of which I have been giving the examples, disappear, and vanish ;—and this, too, without any trouble, soon as ever the mind is once cured of its presumption. “ *Then,*” according to that rule of St. Austin,—“ *we pass over what we do not understand ; and we are edified with all, that we do understand.*”

Where men sincerely, and piously, believe, that the Word of God is deeply mysterious, and therefore impenetrable to our feeble reason,—they, in this case, listen with docility to their pastors, explaining, and justifying, such passages of the sacred text, as are difficult, and perplexing ;—they turn their whole attention towards those principles, which serve, as a key, to the truth ; they are diffident in themselves ; and even timidly careful not to indulge too far, either their curiosity, or their reasonings. Awed by the depth of the mysterious volume, they suffer themselves rather to be judged *by it*, than themselves to judge *it*. They read it, under the guidance of their pastors, or of their prudent, and experienced, directors ; and they read it, also, in the spirit of the Church itself. Conducted by the same maxims of Christian wisdom, they pray, still more than they read ; whilst, again, when they do read, they do so in the spirit of prayer,—convinced, that prayer, beyond every other principle, best opens to us the knowledge of the truth. “ *When the mind,*” says Cassien, “ *is sensible of its own poverty,—which is the first of the beatitudes,—it then penetrates the sense of the sacred Scriptures, less by the reading of the text, than by the experience of its own inability. Then the holy volume unfolds itself more clearly ; and its veins communicate its marrow ; because then we become like the authors of the text ; and we enter into the spirit of him, who composed it.*” (F.)

XIII. It was from the consideration of the difficulties, such as those, which I have stated, that St. Austin has declared, that “ *nothing is more properly denominated the death of the soul, than the servile adherence to the letter of the text.*” He remarks, still farther, that, “ *if, in the Scriptures, there are persons praised, who did certain actions, repugnant to the ways, and manners, of the virtuous, who, since the coming of Christ, observe the divine commandments,—we, in this case, ought to understand these things in a figurative sense ; and not apply*

them to the customs of the present times: for, many things, which were, anciently,—under the old law,—done officially, could now, no longer be done, but by the impulse of the passions.” At the same time, the Saint remarks, that “*the figurative sense, which a prophet had principally in view, so that his narrative of the past is a figure of the future,—this,*” the Saint allows,—“*ought not to be proposed to such as are contentious, and unbelievers.*” He merely maintains, that the Scriptures “*present to the pious Christian abundant reasons not rashly to criticise its divine authority;—whilst the Marcionites, the Manichees, and other heretics, inspired by the devil, seek in them,—in points, which they are incapable of penetrating,—only vain pretexts for calumny and scandal.*”—The rule, which this enlightened Father proposes for the reading of the sacred text, is remarkable. “*Be the doubt,*” he says, “*what it may, that arises in the mind of an individual, whilst reading the Word of God, let him not, hence, abandon his Saviour, Jesus Christ: let him feel, that he understands nothing, until this divine being is revealed to him in his words. Neither let him presume to believe, that he has penetrated the sense of these, until he is so far happily advanced, as to have found in them Christ Jesus himself.*” It is, no doubt, true, that to penetrate, in this manner, the mysterious meaning of many passages of the Bible, is a subject, far surpassing the talents, and acquirements, of the ignorant, and the indocile. For this reason, the same holy Father adds: “*God presents many grand spectacles to the Christian, and pious, heart: and nothing can be more delicious,—provided only that men possess that palate of faith, which relishes the honey of God.*”—Hence, therefore, every thing depends upon the dispositions of the heart. This once well prepared,—the impenetrable depths of the sacred text present nothing hidden to the mind, that is humble, simple, and sincere.—“*The heart,*” says again St. Austin, “*that is full of charity, understands, without either error, or labour, the overflowing abundance, both of the divinity, and of the surpassing doctrine, of the Scriptures.*” And he cites the following simple, and decisive reason: It is this,—“*that the man, who possesses charity, possesses also, at the same time, both what is clear, and what is hidden, in the sacred*

text." The Saint, still farther, requires, that the faithful, when they read the Scriptures, and are unable to penetrate the meaning of any text,—*"shall still, at all events, honour it; and reserve for it in their breasts the sentiments of reverence and fear."* As, however, these are dispositions, which are very rarely to be met with,—so, also, does it very rarely happen, that men are properly prepared to read the sacred pages with real benefit. *"All the divine Scriptures,"* he says, *"are salutary to such as understand them rightly. But, they are dangerous to those who strive to distort them to the accommodation of their own corrupted hearts;—whereas, they ought to accommodate their hearts to the sanctity of the text."* (C.)

The great principle of St. Austin, which he lays down in his book, *De Utilitate Credendi*, is to refute that system of the Manicheans,—a system so flattering to self-love,—that knowledge ought to precede faith. On the contrary, he contends, that the real order of religion is, to begin by humbly believing under the guidance of authority,—in order thus, ere long, to acquire knowledge. It was, therefore, his wish, and plan, that men should read the Scriptures in a spirit of unreserved docility. We must, also, remark, that it was his opinion, that the study, and understanding, of the Scriptures should proceed gradually,—that is, in proportion to the simplicity, the humility, and the conquest over self-love, which each one may have obtained. *"In tantum vident,"* he says, *"in quantum moriuntur huic sæculo. In quantum, autem, huic vivunt, non vident."* According to this holy Doctor, the most learned divine, who thinks, that he understands the Scriptures, without tracing in them every where a system *"of Charity,"* has not, as yet, understood them,—*"nondum intellexit."* On the contrary, he says, as we have seen already:—*"The man, who is led, and supported, by faith, hope, and charity, does not stand in need of the Scriptures, except for the purpose of instructing others. And thus it is, that among the holy solitaries, there are many, who live in the deserts, supported and sanctified by these three virtues alone, without any of the sacred books."* The circumstance is not to be wondered at, observes the Saint,—for this reason: *"Although the most holy pastors of the Church, or the very angels themselves, labour to*

instruct, yet would no one learn well, what he ought to know, in order to live with God, unless God renders him docile to God himself. Thus it is, that the aid of instructions, administered by men, becomes useful to the soul, when God himself interferes, and operates, to render them useful."

XIV. It may, perhaps, be observed, my Lord, that the Books of the Scripture are the same now, that they were in the early ages;—that Bishops, by their ministry, possess the same authority; and that the faithful ought always to be fed with the same bread. It is true:—the Books of the Scripture are the same; but, in all other regards, the state, and circumstances, of men, are altered. Men now, who bear the name of Christians, possess no longer that same simplicity, and teachableness,—that same preparation of heart, and mind, which distinguished the ancient faithful. An immense portion of the Christian world are now little else than Christians, by their baptism received in their infancy, without either any knowledge, or any voluntary engagement. They do not indeed venture to retract their promises, lest the profaneness of such act should excite the horror of the public. They are even too indolent, and indifferent, on the subject of religion, to trouble themselves about such renunciation. At the same time, they would be delighted, if, without any difficulty, they could find out in the sacred pages, arguments to shake off the yoke, and to flatter their passions. Hardly can such men be looked upon, as Catechumens. The Catechumens, who, anciently, were wont to prepare themselves for martyrdom, whilst, at the same time, they were fitting themselves for baptism,—were infinitely superior to those Christians, who bear the name of Christians, only to profane it.—On the other hand, the pastors of the faithful no longer now possess that influence, and authority, which the ancient priesthood wisely employed, with so much gentleness and force. So much is the veneration for the episcopal authority now diminished, that hardly does a vestige of it remain impressed upon the hearts of the public. Whence, also, our order now possesses no longer that paternal influence, which is so essential to inspire that spirit of humble docility, and piety, which is required for the beneficial reading of the sacred books. In these days, all men are casuists, doctors of

divinity,—deciding, each one, for himself:—defending the cause of novelty; and, under the most frivolous pretexts, rejecting the authority of the Church. They dispute, and quibble, about words, without which the sense is an empty phantom. In short, criticism is now carried to the utmost degree of rashness—drying up the heart;—exalting reason above its sphere,—inculcating a contempt for simple, and interior, piety;—and rendering men, not Christians, but philosophers. Even their piety,—where they have any,—is rather a dry, and presumptuous, study, than a life of recollection, and humility. In fact, such are the darings, and conduct, of these men, that, did not the promises of God support my confidence, I should tremble for the speedy overthrow of his Church. Those days are now come, “*when men will not endure sound doctrine—but have itching ears,*”—listening to the voice of every artful innovator.

Wherefore, from these considerations I conclude, that, under such circumstances, it would be highly dangerous to intrust the sacred pages, indifferently, and without any restriction, to the rash criticisms of the public. The great measure should, first, be, to re-establish an order of mild, and paternal, authority; and to instruct the faithful well in the Scriptures, before they undertake to read them. They ought, too, to be gradually prepared for this;—so that when they do come to consult the sacred text, they may be already accustomed to understand it; and be filled with the *spirit*, before they advance to the *letter*. And neither ought the reading of the divine book to be permitted, except to such as are simple, docile, and humble,—to persons, who, in reading it, seek, not to gratify their curiosity,—not to dispute, and criticise,—but, to nourish their piety, and to instruct themselves in silence. In short, the Scriptures should be given to those alone, who, receiving them from the hands of the Church, seek in them only the sense of the Church. (H.)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(A.) PAGE 8.

The Bible, the Sole Rule of the Protestant's Belief.

"The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants."

Such is the fundamental rule of Protestantism,—loudly proclaimed by the first Reformers; and still, every day, re-echoed by their followers. It is, in fact, the real ground of the Reformation; the principle, to which it chiefly owes its triumphs; and which it alleges, as the justification of its separation from the parent Church.

"The great, and important, principle of the sufficient, and exclusive, authority of the Scriptures," says Dr. Gray, ***"to be respected, as the unerring guide in all matters of faith, and religious institution, was the leading star, which conducted our Reformers to the discovery, and acknowledgment, of truth."***—Bamp. Lect.

"This conclusion," says Bishop Hurd, ***"that the Scripture is the sole rule of Christian faith; and that the Pope is Anti-christ!—were the two great principles, on which the Reformation was originally founded."***—Study of Proph.

"Our incomparable Chillingworth, and some others," adds the same prelate, ***"established, for ever, the old principle, that the Bible, and THAT ONLY, interpreted by our best reason, is the religion of Protestants."***

"We must, indeed," says Bishop Tomline, ***"as Protestants,***

ever maintain this principle ; or we cannot justify our having emancipated ourselves from the bondage of the Church of Rome."—Speech before the Lords.

And, then, it is here to be observed, that, whilst thus the Bible is declared to be the sole rule of faith, it is, also, at the same time, declared to be the sole rule, which, *all*, without distinction, are alike, and equally, bound to follow,—the illiterate, and the ignorant, not less than the well-instructed, and the learned. "*It is,*" says the prelate, just cited, "*the unalienable privilege of EVERY Christian to form his own religious opinions ; and to worship God, in the manner, which appears to him most agreeable to the Scriptures.*" The learned Bishop even allows the "unalienability" of this privilege, notwithstanding the ties of any oaths, or subscriptions, to the contrary. "*Notwithstanding,*" he says, "*the subscription to the thirty-nine articles, the liberty of private judgment is recognised by our Church. No individual can give up the right of worshipping God, according to his conscience.*"

The twofold proposition is, therefore, thus admitted, as the fundamental laws of Protestantism,—first, that the Bible is the *sole* rule of faith ; secondly, that the reason of each private individual is its *sole* authorised interpreter. The Protestant, who denies these principles, or who does not actually follow them up in practice,—forming his belief according to the dictates of his own judgment,—is a violator of the most essential maxims of the Reformation.*

* The difference between the Protestant, and the Catholic, doctrine, in relation to the Bible, is this,—that, whereas the Protestant maintains, that the sacred volume is the *sole* rule of faith,—the Catholic contends, that, although it is, indeed, the rule of faith,—it is *not* the *sole*, nor the entire, rule. We assert this, for the following reasons,—first, because the divine book, being difficult, and hard to be understood, does not, *by itself*, suffice to determine our belief ;—and secondly, because there are certain articles of faith, which are not contained, nor so much as alluded to, in it. It is, therefore, upon these accounts,—that is, in order to ascertain what these articles are ; and to decide the true sense of the sacred volume, that we conceive, and believe, it necessary to consult the voice, and authority of *tradition*,—a living testimony, collected from the sentiments of the fathers ; the decrees of councils ; the language of

(B.) PAGE 13.

On the Bible, as the rule of faith.

The most essential property of any thing, that forms a *rule*, is, that it should be plain, and clear,—free from all ambiguous, doubtful, and obscure, expressions,—or at all events, such, that men may, without any great share of labour, or perplexity, understand it. Above all, this is requisite, where persons of every order, and description, are ordained, or permitted, to be its interpreters. For, to propose, as a rule, what few can understand, is, at best, an imprudence. But, to propose, as a rule *for all*, what it is *impossible* for them to understand, is an absurdity.

liturgies; and the practices, prayers, and forms, of the public worship, observed, throughout ages, in the Church.

We are for ever accused by the Protestant writers of making the aforesaid tradition, and *not* the Bible, the rule of our belief. The accusation, like a great multitude of others, is a groundless calumny; for, the Church teaches directly the reverse. Thus, the Council of Trent says, in its fourth session: “*The Gospel is the source of all saving truths, and of all the rules of morals. These truths, and rules, are contained in the Scripture; and in the unwritten traditions, which have come down to us, either received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ, or communicated by them from hand to hand, under the direction of the Holy Ghost.*”—We, therefore, thus admit the Bible, along with tradition, to be the rule of faith,—declaring only, that the Bible is not the sole, and entire rule.

In like manner, it is a very frequent reproach of the above writers, that we place the authority of tradition above the authority of the Bible. This, again, is a falsehood. For the Catholic Church no more places the authority of tradition, above that of the Bible, than any civil tribunal places itself above the law, when it interprets, or determines, the sense of any law. When the civil magistrate does this,—when, in his decisions, he follows the practices of his predecessors; the opinions of lawyers; the long established order of customs, manners, usages, &c., he, in such cases, but follows the intentions, and the constitution, of the state. And thus only it is, in relation to the Bible. The text of the Bible, explained by the decisions of the Church, is simply the same kind of act, as the text of the law, interpreted by the determinations of the civil magistrate.

Thus, by way of example,—let any set of statesmen, or legislators, compose a code of laws for the peace, and order, of society ;—their first, and chief, endeavour is, to frame them so plain, and intelligible ; so free from ambiguities, and doubts, that none can mistake their sense, nor misconceive their application. Such is the essence of the wisdom of civil legislation. If, then, contrary to all this, they compose a code, so obscure, and ambiguous, as to be almost unintelligible,—open to perplexities and difficulties,—the consequence, of course, would be, that we should, at once, condemn the inconsistency, and the ignorance, of the men, who drew it up. And the instrument, being unfitted for its proposed end, would be useless, and unavailing. A dark, and ambiguous rule is, properly speaking, no rule at all.

Wherefore, to apply these maxims to the Bible :—Whoever considers seriously, either the wisdom, or the mercy, of Almighty God, would naturally conclude, that, in the case of his giving a code of religion to his creatures,—a code, designed to be the rule of their belief, and the principle of their salvation,—He would not, on so vitally important a subject, express himself in terms so obscure, and in language so ambiguous, that they could not—or, at least, that the greater portion of them could not,—exactly ascertain their real signification. On the contrary, considering God's wisdom, and mercy ; and making the supposition, that He did really issue such a code ; and a code, moreover, intended to unite mankind in the profession of one, and the same, faith ; and in the observance of one, and the same, worship,—in this case, nothing is more reasonable, than to conclude, that the sacred instrument, adapted to such ends, would be clear, easy, and perspicuous,—measured to the understandings, and the capacities, of the public. For these reasons, therefore, I infer,—and no inference can, I think, be more obvious,—that, if the Bible be not of this description ;—if, on the contrary, it is obscure, dark, perplexed, and ambiguous,—it can never, in this case, have been designed by our divine legislator, to be the *sole* rule of our belief, or the only guide to the sanctuary of truth. Or if, indeed, such be the case,—then, I have no hesitation in asserting, that, of all improvident legislators, our divine Saviour has been one of the

most improvident,—giving to mankind a code of laws, which few, or none, can understand ; and yet, ordaining, at the same time, that *all*,—even the ignorant, and the illiterate,—shall, by their own private interpretation, (for, such is the doctrine of Protestantism,) form, and establish, their belief upon it.

But, in order to show, how little the Bible is calculated to form the *sole* rule of faith ; and how ill the abilities of the public are adapted to understand, or explain, it wisely, I will just cite the sentiments upon this subject of a few of the most learned Protestant critics, and distinguished writers.

“ *In order to understand the Bible,*” says Claude, “ *a great deal is required. A great many obstacles are to be surmounted ; and a great many difficulties to be overcome. The terms are to be weighed exactly ; the style to be examined. Similar expressions must be considered, and dissimilar passages discussed. The sense of obscure, and ambiguous, sentences should be penetrated ; and the connexion of texts alluded to, as they refer to such and such an object. For these purposes, it is necessary to know how to distinguish the Apocryphal books from the Canonical ones ; and to understand the original languages, in order to be enabled to judge of the fidelity of the translations ; insomuch, that it is, in fact, true, that the whole length of life is not too long to do all this well. Nay ; I even say, that it is too short ; and that all human strength is too weak to fathom the sense of the Bible,—the bottomless source of mysteries, and heavenly truths.*” Def. de la Ref.

“ *The ignorant, and the simple,*” says Jurieu, “ *are not only incapable of finding out the truth by reading the Bible ; but, I allow with Monsieur Nicole, that such means of finding out the truth is absurd, and impossible ; and utterly beyond the reach of the public.*” Vrai Syst.

Another distinguished critic,—Illiricus,—maintains, that the Bible is far more unintelligible than the works of the ancient profane writers ; and he ridicules the absurdity of Daillé for having contended, like our modern Bible distributors, that the sacred volume is easy to be understood.

Similar to the above are the sentiments, which many of the established clergy have expressed, respecting the sacred book,—with more candour, it is true, than consistency, in them.

“ *Whatever some may dream,*” writes the late Bishop of Durham, Van Mildert, “ *of the facility of extracting from the Scripture a coherent, and correct, system of divine truth, this hardly is to be effected, without such qualifications, and attainments, as we shall look for in vain among a very considerable portion of mankind. . . . A general knowledge of the principles of grammar, and criticism; and an acquaintance with the idioms of the language, in which any book is written, are, in every instance, indispensable. . . . It is chiefly by attention to the verbal analogy of Scripture, that the Biblical critic is to be distinguished. Here, his labours must begin; and aid must be sought of a competent apparatus for the purpose,—of Concordances; Scripture Lexicons; and other helps of a similar kind. Commentators, harmonists, philologists,—all must be called in, to enable us to analyse, or to combine; rightly to divide, or to compare, spiritual truths. To neglect these, is virtually to neglect the means of profiting by the Bible.*” Bamp. Lect.

“ *It is the duty,*” says Bishop Mant, “ *of every Christian, and it is the privilege of every Protestant, to search the Scriptures. But, it is not every man, who is duly qualified to explain them to advantage. . . . In order to understand the Scriptures, not only much zeal, and diligence, are necessary; but also, much study in preparatory exercises; much care in comparing them; much judgment in applying them; much discrimination in distinguishing between passages of a limited, and those of an universal import; much humility, and sobriety, of mind, in explaining the more mysterious points of doctrine; and especially, freedom from all prepossession, &c.*” (Bampt. Lect.) How rare,—alas, how very rare,—are all the above virtues, and qualifications, which the learned prelate thus requires for the prudent interpretation of the Bible! They are nowhere to be met with in the ordinary walks of life. So that according to his doctrine,—directly opposed to the leading principle of the Protestantism,—the public, being unfit, and incompetent, to understand the Bible, ought not, therefore, to undertake the dangerous task. Indeed, if “ *freedom from all prepossession be ESPECIALLY*” required to perform it well, I know few writers, who are less fitted for it, than Dr. Mant himself, whose notes, annotations, and criticisms, on the sacred volume betray,

not only the strongest prepossessions,—but a degree of prejudice, and hostility, to every thing Catholic, such as should live in the breast only of the bigot.

Another learned Bampton Lecturer, Dr. Barrow, writes thus :—“ *It is not possible to prove, that, in language the most familiar to us, any given number of interpreters annex precisely the same idea to the same simple term. How differently, then, may different men be reasonably expected to understand the general, and comprehensive, principles of morality; and the mysterious doctrines of theology, contained in the Christian revelation. The truths, and precepts, of religion are conveyed to us in the language of a distant age, and country; and consequently, in translations only can they be known to the great majority of mankind. They are expressed in terms, alluding to the customs, and manners, of the times; to peculiar modes of thinking, and acting, now known by little else than these allusions themselves. They are collected from a variety of treatises, historical, prophetic, moral, and religious. . . . No wonder, then, surely, that so many theological controversies have begun, and ended, in mere disputes about the meaning of words. No wonder, under these circumstances, that the upright, the pious, and even the learned, should have been led into the mistaken interpretations of the Scripture to hold mistaken doctrines.*” Bampton. Lect.

I could cite the opinions of many other learned Protestant critics, and divines, similar to the preceding,—admitting, not only the difficulties, and obscurity, of the Bible, but the absolute impossibility for the ordinary classes of society to understand it. And what is this, in reality, but acknowledging the falsehood of the leading principle of Protestantism, which constitutes every private individual the interpreter of the sacred volume, and the arbiter of his own belief?

The foregoing extracts, and observations, may appear applicable,—as they are intended chiefly to apply,—to the ordinary classes of society,—to the ignorant, illiterate, &c. However, it is not to these alone, that they are applicable. They are applicable, perhaps equally,—if not, indeed, more so,—to the learned, and to the better educated members of the public. For, is it not an incontestable truth, that, among all the pre-

sumed interpreters of the Bible, there are none, who, in the schools of Protestantism, disagree so much amongst themselves, as the learned do ;—none, who have invented so many systems, broached so many errors, and contradicted each other so pointedly. Indeed, hardly is there a single text, however plain, relating to any doctrine, which the ingenuity, the perversity, or the folly, of these interpreters have not tortured, and distorted, into endless, opposite, and often quite contrary, significations. It is by the Bible, in short, that men have always attacked the truth, and defended every form of error. Whence, also, it has been justly called, “ *the book of heretics.*” However, independently of the above considerations, is it not true, that, if the Bible were that easy, and intelligible, book, which the Reformers, and our Biblicals now pretend it is,—is it not true, that, in this case, it would not,—should not,—stand in need of so many comments, glosses, notes, annotations, &c., to explain its meaning? Do, then, these men, with their notes, and explanations, consider themselves more competent, and better able, to instruct the public, than God Himself,—the divine Author of the sacred volume? The real truth is,—that the circumstance of declaring the Bible, the *sole* rule of faith, and the reason of each person, its *only* authorised interpreter, is as gross an imposition upon the simplicity of the ignorant,—as deceitful an artifice,—as was ever invented, either by the spirit of error, or by the artifices of hypocrisy.

It was after considering the difficulties of the Bible ; and the conflicting, and contradictory, doctrines, which the Protestant sectarists, every where, borrow from it, that Lord Bolingbroke makes the following observations:—“ *Writers of the Roman religion have attempted to show, that the text of the Holy Writ is, on many accounts, insufficient to be the sole criterion of orthodoxy. I apprehend, too, that they have shown it. Sure I am, that experience, from the first promulgation of Christianity till this hour, shows abundantly, with how much ease, and success, the most opposite, the most extravagant,—nay, the most impious,—opinions, and the most contradictory faiths, may be founded on the same text, and plausibly defended by the same authority. Writers of the reformed religion have erected their batteries against tradition : and the only difficulty they*

had to encounter in their enterprise, lay in LEVELLING.”—
Study of Hist.

(C.) PAGE 14.

The Bible is not proposed to us, as the sole rule of faith.

If the Bible be the sole, and sufficient, rule of Christian faith,—as the Protestant maintains it is,—then, since this is the most important article in the code of Protestantism, being the very basis upon which all its claims are founded,—then, should the testimony of the Bible itself, in some text or other, establish the interesting fact. This, indeed, is a point, which the consistent Protestant cannot deny. Well; and what then is the case? Does the Bible itself any where establish such article,—any where, declaring itself the sole, and sufficient, rule of the Christian’s faith; and, as such, consigned to us by the divine wisdom, as the only guide, and foundation, of our belief? I reply at once,—Most certainly, no where. Among all the sacred writers, who have composed the books of the New Testament,—there is not one, who either states, or insinuates, such fact,—not one, who ever declares, or even hints, that these books are, either the only, or the complete, code of the Christian doctrines.

Our Divine Redeemer, we know it, wrote nothing: he only preached. But, did he not command his Apostles to write? Of this, or of such command, there is no testimony whatsoever in the Bible. So that thus, there is no proof, in the sacred book itself, that any *written word* has ever been appointed by Christ Jesus himself to be the rule of our belief. It is true, the Apostles, and the other inspired writers, did, ere long, compose their respective treatises. But, not even did they do this, until some time after the death of their Divine Master. So that the *unwritten word* was, during all that interval, the sole rule of Christian faith; “*and the doctrines, which Christ had taught, were then,*” as Bishop Marsh has observed, “*so many divine TRADITIONS.*” Now, in relation to the conduct, or writing, of the Apostles,—it may be remarked, that, out of their number, there were seven, who, for aught we know, never wrote at all;

or from whom, at least, we have received no written documents. Now ; whence this silence, or this neglect, if either these holy men had been appointed by Christ to compose the Christian code ; or if, like the Protestants, they had considered a written code, as the sole rule of Christian faith ? The fact is,—independently of all other considerations,—that to have had written a code of laws at that time, or in the early ages, as the only rule of faith, would have been of little or no avail. For, before the art, and use of printing, books were extremely scarce ; and, therefore, extremely expensive things ; so that few, and these only the rich, could have purchased, and enjoyed, the benefit of them. Under these circumstances, then, it is surely impossible to imagine, that God would attach the knowledge of faith, and the securities of salvation, to a book, which few could procure, few read, and very few understand.

With regard to the books of the New Testament, which we now possess,—these, for the most part, are the fruit of events, and of accidental circumstances,—composed, not so much for the benefit of the public, as for the consolation, and instruction, of private individuals. Thus, six of the Epistles are addressed merely to individuals ; and ten of them to the converts in different, and distant, countries,—to men, wholly unconnected, and unacquainted, with each other. But, neither in these, nor in any other portions of the Bible, is there any thing, that can be reasonably considered, as a regular, and perfect, code of religious doctrines. For, in none of them, is there any connected order of instruction ; any arrangement of articles ; any distinct statements, and clear definitions, of each object of belief. Neither, among all the sacred books, is there one, that contains all, and each, of the essential doctrines of Christian faith. It is, indeed, even the opinion of the present Regius Professor of Divinity in Oxford,—the learned Dr. Hampden,—that, in the whole series of the Bible, there are, strictly speaking, no doctrines laid down at all. “ *Strictly to speak,*” he says, “ *in the Scripture, there are no doctrines. What we read there is matter of fact,—either fact, nakedly set forth, as it occurred ; or fact, explained, and elucidated, by the light of inspiration, cast upon it. . . . If any part of Scripture contains doctrinal statements, it will, at any rate, be supposed to*

be the Epistolary. But, even this part, if accurately considered, will not be found an exception." If, indeed, the Bible is the sole, and sufficient, rule, or code, of Christian faith,—it is certainly the most extraordinary code, that religion any where possesses,—so confused, so obscure, and perplexing, that not any two individuals, attempting to interpret it, would ever chance to arrive at the same conclusion. More consistent far than it is, (*if it be the sole rule of faith,*) are those Creeds, and Confessions, drawn up by many of the Churches of the Reformation. For, in these, there is arrangement, order, definition, and direct statements of the respective doctrines, which they profess.

"*Faith,*" says St. Paul, "*cometh by hearing ; and hearing, by the word of Christ :*"—that is, not by reading, but by preaching. Accordingly, such was the fact :—The apostles, and their disciples, and successors, planted the Gospel ; and converted nations, not so much by their writings,—(seven of the apostles never wrote at all,)—as by their preaching. This is but conformable to the plan, and design, of Christ. For, when the Divine Being gave the commission to his apostles,—and in them, to their successors,—to convert the world,—he neither commanded, nor yet instructed, them to *write*. The commission, which he gave them, was to *preach*. "*Go ye,*" He said to them, "*into the whole world, and PREACH the Gospel to every creature.*" "*Go ; and TEACH all nations, baptizing them,*" &c. Accordingly, in compliance with the holy commission, "*they went forth, and preached everywhere.*" They *all* preached ; whereas, *five* only of them *wrote*. They *all* preached ; and it was "*by hearing*" their preaching,—according to the aforesaid words of St. Paul,—that "*the faith*" of the public "*came.*"

Referring, again, to periods, subsequent to the time of the apostles, or to some of the best, and purest, ages of the Church, we find, in like manner, that it was not by the circulation of Bibles, that nations were converted,—but, by the preaching of,—almost wholly,—if not wholly,—of the pastors of the faithful. In reality, at those periods, and in many of those nations, there was hardly so much as a Bible to be found. Neither,—had there even been any,—would the natives of many nations have understood them ;—seeing, that the Bible remained long un-

translated, and confined only to two languages. So that it could thus, of course, be no rule of faith to them. "*If the apostles,*" says St. Irenæus, "*had not left us any writings, must we not, in this case, have followed the rule of doctrine, which they had delivered to those, to whom they had confided their churches? To this rule many barbarous nations submit, which, without the aid of letters, have the words of salvation written upon their hearts; and preserve carefully the doctrines, which once were delivered to them.*"

During the four first, and brightest, ages of the Church, such was the order of its discipline, that its pastors never placed the Bible in the hands of the newly-converted Christians. On the contrary, induced by the dictates of prudence, they carefully withheld it, until such time as these individuals had been instructed, and properly prepared for the revelation of the great mysteries, contained in the sacred volume. The length of this probation varied, of course, with the dispositions, and acquirements, of the convert. But, it was usually of three years' duration, never shorter than two. Meanwhile, it was conducted always by the teaching, and oral instructions, of the clergy. Now, surely, if the Bible be the sole rule, and the surest guide, of faith,—all this was both very inconsistent, and very unjustifiable. In such case, the pastors of the Church ought, just like the Protestants now, to have placed the Bible, at once, in the hands of the pious Neophytes; and bade them study, and learn, their religion there. However, more prudent than the Protestants, they felt the danger of doing this. They felt the danger of placing in the hands of a set of men, not yet sufficiently enlightened, a book, which, being difficult, and obscure, they might not understand, and might very easily misunderstand.

"*It may startle those,*" says the learned Mr. Newman, "*who are but acquainted with the popular writings of this day,—yet, I believe, the most accurate consideration of the subject will lead us to acquiesce in the statement, as a general truth, that the doctrines in question (the great, and leading, mysteries of religion) have never been learned merely from the Scripture. Surely, the sacred volume was never intended, and was not adapted, to TEACH us our Creed;—however certain it is, that*

we can prove our Creed from it, when it has once been taught us. From the very first, the rule has been, as a matter of fact, for the Church to teach the truth; and then appeal to the Scripture in vindication of its own teaching. . . . The insufficiency of the mere private study of Holy Scripture for arriving at the entire truth, which it contains, is shown by the fact, that Creeds, and teachers, have ever been divinely provided; and by the discordance of opinions, which exist, whenever these aids are thrown aside, as well as by the very structure of the Bible itself."—(The Arians of the Fourth Century.) What words can, better than these, express the wisdom of our Catholic principles, or more strikingly point out the imperfection of the rule of Protestantism?

Having stated what was the discipline of the Church, during its brightest ages, in relation to the reading, and interpretation, of the Bible, I have, of course, equivalently stated, also, the sentiments of the early writers, and Fathers, upon the same subject. Suffice it, therefore, to say, that among all these illustrious characters, there is not, any where, so much as *one*, who, with the Protestant, maintains that the Bible is the *sole* rule of faith, or that each private individual is its interpreter. Never did such notions enter into their theology. On the contrary, they all unanimously declare, that the real rule of the Christian's faith is the teaching of the Church, grounded upon the basis of its divine, and unerring, authority. "*What,*" says Tertullian, addressing the Arians, "*what will you gain by appealing to the Scriptures; whereas each one of you denies, what the other asserts? Learn rather, who it is, that possesses the faith of Christ; and to whom the Scriptures themselves belong;—from whom, by whom, that faith was delivered, by which we are made Christians. For, where the true faith is found, there only will be found the true Scriptures; and there only, the true interpretation of them; and there, again, all Christian traditions. Christ chose his apostles, whom he commissioned to teach all nations. They delivered his doctrines, and established Churches. . . . Now, in order to know, what the apostles taught, the method is, to have recourse to the Churches, which they founded. For, it is plain, that all doctrines, which accord with the doctrines of the parent*

Churches, are true,—being those, which they received from the apostles ;—the apostles from Christ ; and Christ from God. All other opinions are new, and false.”

“ There are multitudes,” says Origen, “ who imagine, that they believe, what Christ has taught : and among these, many differ among themselves. For this reason, it is necessary, that every one should profess that doctrine, which has come down to us from the apostles ; and which now continues in the Church. This alone is the truth, in no respect differing from apostolical tradition.”

Such, too, as this is the language, and such as these are the maxims, of all the early councils of the Church,—not permitting each individual to be the judge of the Bible, and the arbiter of his own belief ;—but, with supreme authority, laying down the doctrines of the Church, and commanding all to submit to their decisions. Just like the apostles, the Fathers, assembled in these councils, with great solemnity, on every occasion, declared : *“ It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us.”* In short, the principle, which, every where, and in every age, has been adopted, and followed, in the Church of Christ, in relation to the doctrines of faith, is the principle of *Authority*,—of an unerring, and infallible, Authority. It was hence, that St. Austin said,—*“ he would not believe the Bible itself, if the authority of the Church did not compel, or engage, him to do so.”*

(D.) PAGE 17.

The Bible is not a complete Code of Faith.

“ Holy Scripture,” says the sixth of the thirty-nine articles, *“ containeth all things, necessary to salvation. So that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed, as an article of the faith ; or be thought requisite, or necessary, to salvation.”* Such is the doctrine of the Established Church, respecting the all-sufficiency of the Bible.

The Bible, it is thus declared, contains all the necessary articles of Christian faith. Now, is this the fact ? And are

there not articles of faith, which the members of the Established Church,—as well as Protestants in general,—admit, which yet are not contained in the Bible? As here, there is only question of a notorious fact, so the reply is obvious. For example,—

The Protestants admit, as an article of their belief, the obligation of keeping holy the Sunday. Now, where, in any page of the sacred volume, is there any proof, or attestation, of such obligation? It is no where stated to have been imposed, either by Christ, or his apostles;—no where recorded, or so much as alluded to, in any one of the Gospels, or in any one of the Epistles. It is, therefore, certain, that the Bible does not contain every article of Christian faith; and that the Protestant admits, as a necessary portion of his Creed, an article, which is not comprised in this sacred record. The truth is:—the sole proof of the obligation of sanctifying the Sunday, in place of the Jewish sabbath, is founded, not at all upon any Scriptural sanction, but wholly, and exclusively, upon the authority of *Tradition*.

It is an article of faith in the Established Church,—and, again, in some other Protestant sects,—that the Sacrament of Baptism is alike established for the salvation of Infants, as it is for the benefit of Adults. And believing this, they accordingly ordain, as an essential duty, that the divine rite shall be equally administered to Infants, as to such Adults, who had not received it in their childhood. Now, all this, we, as Catholics, approve. Only, we ask again:—Where, in what part, or text, of the Bible is this article of the necessity of Infant Baptism contained? Most certainly, no where. It is no where recorded, nor so much as recommended, in any page of the sacred volume. Precisely like the article respecting the observance of the Sunday, it rests solely upon the authority of the unwritten word,—*Tradition*. And it is hence, that some, among the Protestant sects, reject it.

It is an article of the Protestant's faith, that the Bible is a divinely inspired book,—the dictate of the Holy Ghost. This, indeed, is an article, which, to him,—grounding all his faith, as he professes to do, upon the Bible,—is, of all others, the most vitally important. Well; but here, again, recurs the same difficulty, as above. For, how does he know, or by what ar-

gument, or criterion, can he prove, that the Book is certainly divine? He does not know it; neither can he prove it,—although this is what, with his principles, he should do,—from the Bible itself. The Bible neither proclaims its own inspiration; nor can the sacred article be proved by any testimony of the Bible. To prove its inspiration, or divine character, an appeal must be made to some testimony, or evidence, beyond, or out of, the holy volume. Thus, even our great Redeemer, when he had declared himself the Son of God, did not require the Jews to believe him, on the mere testimony of his word; but, in order to prove the truth of his word, He referred them to his miracles. It was thus, too, that the apostles acted. They, when they announced themselves the envoys of God, did not pretend to establish the truth of the fact by their mere assertions; but, like their Divine Master, they appealed to the external evidences of the wonders, which they performed. Thus, therefore, it is, in relation to the Bible. To prove the inspiration of the Bible, the method is, to appeal, not to the Bible itself, but to the facts, and evidences, which establish its inspiration,—that is, once more, *to the authority of Tradition.*

In reality, all this is so obvious, and consistent, that many,—and these the most enlightened,—Protestant divines, have admitted the truth of the foregoing observations. Thus, for example, the excellent and learned Hooker says: “*We all believe, that the Scriptures of God are sacred; and that they have proceeded from God. . . . We have for this point a demonstration, sound, and infallible. But, it is not the word of God, which doeth, or possibly can assure us, that we do well to think it His word. For, if any one book of Scripture did give testimony to all, yet, still, that Scripture, which giveth credit to the rest, would require another Scripture to give credit unto it. Neither could we ever come to any pause, whereon to rest our assurance, this way.*” Eccl. Pol.

“*It is said,*” says Jeremy Taylor, “*that the Scripture itself is wholly derived to us by tradition; and therefore, besides Scripture, tradition is necessary in the Church. And, indeed, no man, that understands this question, denies this. This tradition, that these books were written by the apostles, and were delivered by the apostles, as the word of God, relies principally*

upon tradition universal,—that is, it was witnessed to be true by all the Christian world, at their first being so consigned.”—He says again: “*No man inquires, whether the Scriptures contain all things necessary for salvation, unless he believe that there are Scriptures;—that these are they;—and that they are the word of God. All this comes to us by Tradition,—that is, by universal, undeniable, testimony.*”—Thus, then, it is acknowledged, that, as the most essential article of Christian faith is founded upon Tradition, so it is, consequently, manifest, that the Bible, notwithstanding the declaration of the sixth of the thirty-nine articles, is not, in point of fact, the sole rule even of the Protestant’s belief.

Another article of the Protestant’s faith, connected immediately with the preceding, is the belief, that such and such books of the Bible,—and such and such books *alone*,—are *Canonical*; and, as such, to be *alone* received, as the undoubted word of God. This, again, is a leading article of the Protestant’s belief, which therefore, according to his rule of faith, should be proved by the testimony of the Bible itself. And does then the Bible establish the important article? Most certainly, *not*:—neither, indeed, is it even so much as pretended, that it does. The sole medium, through which the Established Church, or any Protestant Church, derive the presumed knowledge of their respective canons, is that same medium which I have cited in all the foregoing examples,—the authority of *Tradition*. This is so true, that,—take away this authority,—and the Protestant has no proof to establish the divinity of the Bible; nor therefore,—according to his principles,—to establish the divinity of Christianity itself.

In regard to the canon of the New Testament, this, according to the general opinion of divines, was never decidedly determined until the end of the fourth century. Basnage, indeed, maintains, that there was never any generally received canon, during the first five, or six, centuries; and that each Church, according to its own judgment, adopted what books it pleased. He, moreover, contends, that, so late, as in the seventh, and eighth centuries, it was still doubted, in many Churches, whether the Epistle to the Hebrews; the Apocalypse; and several books of the Old Testament, were Canonical, or not.

But, at all events, until the fourth century, it is certain, that many parts of the Bible, which are now received as Canonical, were then considered as doubtful, or wholly rejected. Such was the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews; the Second Epistle of St. James; that of St. Jude; the Second, and Third of St. John; as well as his book of Revelations. Thus, how false, and deceitful, is that declaration of the sixth of the thirty-nine articles, which states, that—“*In the name of the Holy Scripture, we do understand those Canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority WAS NEVER ANY DOUBT IN THE CHURCH,*”—whereas, until the fourth century at soonest, *the doubt*, respecting certain books, was almost universal! Even at present the Protestant Churches do not agree among themselves, respecting the sacred canon. The canon of the Lutheran Churches is different from that of the Calvinistic; and each of these is different from that of the Church of England;—while, among the multifarious sects, there is hardly a point, on which they are more completely divided. The Church of England itself admits now into its canon certain books, which, at the earlier periods of the Reformation, it had rejected.

But, by the way of specimen of the notions, which the Protestant Churches, and multitudes of Protestant writers, have entertained, and defended, concerning the canon of the Holy Scriptures,—as well as concerning certain other points relating to the sacred volume, I will just cite the opinion (no opinion should be so much respected by the Protestant) of the great Founder himself of Protestantism,—“*The Evangelist*,” as he calls himself,—and as he is still called by the Protestant world,—“*The Evangelist*, sent by God to enlighten the universe, and to bring men back to the ways of truth.” The following, then, are specimens of the opinion, which Luther entertained upon the aforesaid subjects. I extract them from No. 121 of the Edinburgh Reviewers, who, also, extract them from the works themselves of the great Archapostle.

“*The Books of Kings are more worthy of credit than the Books of the Chronicles.*

“*Job spoke, not as it stands written in his Book; but had only such cogitations. It is a sheer ‘ARGUMENTUM*

FABULÆ.' *It is probable, that Solomon made, and wrote this Book.*

" *This book,—ECCLESIASTES,—ought to have been more full. There is too much broken matter in it. It has neither boots, nor spurs, but rides only in socks, as I myself did when in the cloister. Solomon has not, therefore, written this book, which was made, in the days of the Maccabees, by Sirach. It is like a Talmud, compiled from many books; perhaps in Egypt, at the desire of king Ptolemy Euergetes. So, also, have the Proverbs of Solomon been collected by others.*

" *The book of ESTHER I toss into the Elbe. I am such an enemy to the book of Esther, that I wish it did not exist: for, it Judaizes too much, and has in it a great deal of heathenish naughtiness.*

" *ISAIAH has borrowed his art, and knowledge, from the Psalter.*

" *The history of JONAH is so monstrous, that it is absolutely incredible.*

" *That the EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS is not by St. Paul, nor by any apostle at all, is shown by chap. ii. 3. It is by an excellently learned man, a disciple of the apostles. It should be no stumbling-block, if there be found in it a mixture of wood, straw, and hay.*

" *THE EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES I account the writing of no apostle. It is an Epistle of STRAW.*

" *THE EPISTLE OF JUDE is a copy of St. Peter's; and alleges stories, which have no place in Scripture.*

" *In the REVELATION OF JOHN, much is wanting to let me deem it apostolical. I can discover no trace in it, that it is established by the Spirit."*

Such as these were a few of the many strange ideas, which Luther,—the reputed organ of the Holy Ghost,—entertained of the character, and canonicity, of many of the books of the Sacred Scriptures. Neither, indeed, is he alone, or singular, in these regards. I could, with ease, from the works of many learned Protestant writers, cite opinions, equally wild, and unbecoming, as they are. So, for example, as the aforesaid reviewers remark, the present Bishop of Peterborough, the learned Dr. Marsh, maintains, "*that the three first Gospels are*

composed of fragments, which were collected together." This, too, is an hypothesis,—alike irreconcilable with the canonicity of those sacred books, as it is with the assurance of their inspiration.—Again, the reviewers observe, that, in regard of the Apocalypse,—a book, declared, in the thirty-nine articles, to be canonical, and inspired,—“*the most learned, and intelligent, of Protestant divines have, ALMOST ALL, doubted, or denied, its canonicity. Calvin, and Beza, denounced the book unintelligible, and prohibited the pastors of Geneva from all attempt at interpretation; for which they were applauded by Joseph Scaliger, and Isaac Casaubon. Joseph Scaliger,—who also rejected the Epistle of St. James,—did not believe the Apocalypse to be the writing of St. John, and allowed only two chapters to be comprehensible; while Dr. South scrupled not to pronounce it ‘a book, that either found a man mad, or left him so.’*”

Thus, then,—as in the case of the other objects, which I have cited in this note,—it follows, in the first place, that, although the canonicity of the Bible be an article of the Protestant's faith,—yet, this is no where established,—as, according to his principles, it should be,—by the Bible itself;—and secondly, that the opinions of the most learned defenders of the Protestant cause, concerning its canonicity, are so loose, and discordant,—not to say, profane,—that no fixed reliance can, by any Protestant, be consistently placed in its certitude, or its divinity. So much for one of the fundamental articles of Protestantism!*

* It is a circumstance, more or less fortunate for the general cause of religion, that few Protestants ever give themselves the trouble to examine the important questions, relating to the canonicity, inspiration, &c. of the Holy Scriptures,—subjects, which, *with their principles*, they are strictly bound to have discussed, ere they believe. Induced by habit, and example, or else lulled by indolence and indifference, they take it *for granted*, that the sacred volume is divine,—piously, but blindly, *presupposing*, what they ought to have proved; and without any sufficient reason, believing, what only the strongest reasons should have engaged them to admit. All this may, in some regards, be well: but, in the Protestant, it is a violation of his own leading principles.

(E.) PAGE 20.

On the Effects of the Protestant Rule of Faith.

It has been already observed, in the preceding notes, that, if the Bible were designed to be the sole rule of the Christian's faith, it ought, in this case, to have been plain, and easy to be understood. For, it is repugnant to the notions, which we entertain of God's wisdom, to suppose, that He would dictate, and prescribe, as a rule,—and as a rule, destined for the use of *all*,—an instrument, so obscure, and perplexing, that few or none can comprehend it. Whence, I inferred, that, since the Bible is of this description,—it is not,—cannot,—therefore, be the *sole* rule of our belief.

There is, however, another criterion, alike sure, and consistent, as the foregoing, by which we may form a prudent judgment upon the subject. This is, the *effects* which the application of the said rule has produced, and produces still. The tree is best known by its fruits. “*Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.*” Accordingly, if the Bible is indeed the sole rule of faith,—dictated, and prescribed, by the Holy Ghost, for the use, and direction, of every individual,—then, of course, its *effects* should be, not the production of error, and the propagation of confusion,—but,—conformably to the beneficence of its design,—the growth, and promotion, of truth, and piety; and since truth is essentially *One*,—the safeguard, also, of unity and concord. These, certainly, are the effects, which the boasted principle should produce, if, as it is alleged, it be the dictate of the Holy Ghost. For, surely, a principle, which is made the grounds of every kind of error, heresy, and fiction,—which is the source of endless contradictions, and disorders, cannot reasonably be deemed the divine, and *sole* rule of our belief. However, as the tree is best known by its fruits,—so let us just rapidly take a view of some of its *effects*.

No sooner, then, had Luther,—unfurling the standard of rebellion,—proclaimed the great charter of Protestantism,—declaring the Bible the sole rule of faith, and the reason of

each individual its only authorised interpreter,—no sooner had he done this, and engaged men,—as he early did,—to embrace the proffered privilege,—than, straight, confusion in every attitude, and error in every shape, began, every where, to reign. There now rose up,—for they had the same right to do so, as Luther had,—there now rose up whole hosts of teachers, and interpreters of the sacred volume;—inculcating, and disseminating, doctrines, the most discordant and contradictory,—some of them extravagant and absurd, some of them impious and profane. The flood-gates of licentiousness were thrown open, and there rushed into all the avenues of society,—hitherto, so peaceful and united,—a vast torrent of confusion, and disorder. The number of organized sects, and religions, which, within the interval of a few years, was established among the reformers, exceeded, according to the testimony of some of the Protestant historians,—Functius, Lindan, &c.—upwards of two hundred. The confusion was, indeed, such, that Luther, lamenting now the evils, which his own violence had created,—exclaimed, “ *Men are now come to such a pitch of disorder, that they stand no longer in need of any teachers. Every man now gives the law to himself.*” Mosheim states, that in some parts of Germany,—such was the growth of error, and fanaticism,—the magistrates interfered, and forbade the reading of the Bible. This, too, as I have already remarked, was, more or less, the case in this country,—when, in 1543, the parliament, in consequence of the abuses, resulting from the indiscriminate use of the sacred book, restricted the reading of it to such persons only, as were deemed the most competent to understand it.

It is the property of error to go on increasing: and the increase, where every man is allowed to interpret the Bible, as his own judgment prompts him,—where each enthusiast, fanatic, or needy fellow, may preach, and dogmatise, just as his fancy, his folly, or his interest, guide him,—the increase of error must, of course, under such circumstances, be rapid. Accordingly, since the aforesaid periods, just referred to, the progress of error, and confusion, in every Protestant communion, and society, has, with frightful rapidity, continued to run on. So that now there are, not merely as in the early

days of the Reformation, two hundred sects, as stated by Functionius, &c., but sects, so numberless, that not all the curiosity of learning could contrive to count them up; and sects too, which, like those created by the first reformers, are alike,—many of them,—the disgrace of reason, as they are the mockery of religion. And yet,—for this is the boasted pretension of them all,—they are *all* founded upon the Bible;—*all*, and *every one*, of them, *scriptural religions*.

But, in order to trace, if possible, in a still more awful point of view, the *effects*, which the charter of the Reformation, with its rule of belief, has every where introduced, and established, in the Protestant world, I will briefly refer to the accounts, which a multitude of Protestant writers have given of them. From these, it will appear, that scepticism, infidelity, Socinianism, and the widest, wildest, latitudinarianism, are now, in all Protestant states, the general characteristics of their members; and, above all, of their learned writers, and professors.—For example:

Germany.—In Germany,—the cradle of the Reformation,—Protestantism is here little else than a mere term, expressing, not what its nominal professors believe, but what they do not believe: it implies much more the disbelief of all religion, than the belief in any. “*Our Divines*,” says Starke, himself a Protestant,—“*Our Divines call the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity, religious prejudices. Just like so many carpenters, constantly hacking, and hewing away, they have made the temple of religion a mere miserable hovel.*”—“*The Academical Protestantism of Germany*,” say the writers of the Quarterly Review, “*is hardly a veiled Deism. . . . The Bible, in the hands of these Christian commentators, is changed into a mere minstrelsy of the Jewish Border,—a patchwork of wild old ballads.*” Müller,—again a Protestant,—asserts the same thing: “*Many of our theologians*,” he tells us, “*make it an absolute duty to drown the fundamental doctrines of Christianity in pure Deism.*” Hence it was, that Coleridge informs us, that, whilst he was in Germany, “*he found the professors in the universities lecturing against the most material points in the Gospel.*” In short, Protestantism in Germany, although it retains the name of Protestantism, is little else, particularly

among the learned, than downright infidelity: whilst, in regard of the *peculiar* tenets of Luther, there is no where an individual that now believes so much as one single article of them;—so little is the apostle of the Reformation now regarded as the apostle of the truth.

Geneva.—“*In Geneva,*”—the cradle of Calvinism,—“*its Pastors,*” says the learned Grenus, “*have already cleared the immutable boundary,—Ils ont déjà franchi la borne immuable. Ils ont donnés la main aux Déistes, aux ennemis de la foi. Ils ont rompus la grande Société Chrétienne.*”—“*As for the confessions of Geneva,*” says its present professor of theology,—“*these have perished from old age, and illness.*” Empaytaz,—a zealous Protestant, himself, informs us, still farther, that, “*In Switzerland, Christianity, in regard to dogmas, is almost wholly exploded; and that Socinianism reigns there, uncontrolled.*”

France.—In France, the case is nearly the same, as it is in the two preceding countries. Its Protestant professors are Protestants in name, but Socinians,—that is, not Christians,—in reality. Whence, also, they have adopted the Socinian catechism of Vernés,—“*A Catechism,*” says their late Arch-priest, Maron, “*possessing this great advantage, that it is suited to all communions, because it includes none of the articles, which divide them.*” These are consequences, which had always been foretold by the Catholics, and, long since, foreseen by the reformed pastors of the French Churches. The latter, in a memorial, addressed to their flocks,—lamenting the evil,—express themselves thus:—“*We are now far removed from the paths, which our predecessors had laid open to us, at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Luther, and Calvin, have now few followers amongst us. Our party, cut up, at present, into a thousand divisions, is no longer to be found. Instead of that spirit, which used once to animate us, there has succeeded a complete state of indifferentism; and a system of Pyrrhonism is now, we believe, the prevailing order of public opinion. Our very pastors, shaken in their belief, preach, instead of dogmas little else than morals.*”

England.—In England,—under the guidance of the rule of Protestantism,—the spirit, and prevalence, of latitudi-

narianism, above all, among the more learned portions of its members, are alike common, as they are in the other Protestant Churches of Europe. Indeed, the French, and other, philosophers have denominated England, "the very school of infidelity." "*There is,*" say the eloquent writers of the 'British Critic,' "*quite enough of infidelity amongst us, already; and liberal principles,—that is, no fixed principles whatsoever,—are professed in every quarter. And in spite of the apparent tranquillity, which reigns around, the day may not be distant, in which there will be as little belief among the gentlemen of England, as there is now among the philosophers of Germany,—that is, NONE AT ALL.*"—But, it is not to "the gentlemen of England" alone, that the accusation of incredulity is imputable. It has been often, by a multitude of writers, imputed equally to its Clergy. Thus, speaking of these men, Gibbon says of them:—"The doctrine of the Established Church is now far removed from the belief of its members; and the Articles of their faith are subscribed by the Clergy, with a sigh, or a smile. Thus, the predictions of the Catholics are accomplished; and the pillars of revelation are shaken by men, who preserve the name, without the substance of religion."—The learned Edinburgh Reviewers made, but the other day, remarks upon this same order of men, still more pointed than those of Gibbon:—"The nearest approximation," they say, "to the learned freedom of the German divines has been found among the English Clergy, and the teachers, and dignitaries, of the English universities. Were we, in fact, required to look round in this country for the centre, in which a spirit of theological inquiry, analogous to that of the Protestant universities of the empire, has been most conspicuously manifested, we should find it in our own venerable schools. Mainly to the latitudinarian divines of Cambridge do the Germans trace the determination, which, in its result, occasioned among themselves the memorable revolution in theological opinions."—Such as these are the effects,—and they are but the consistent effects,—of the Protestant rule of faith;—such the state of Protestantism, even in this country, where its Established Clergy are so richly paid for their belief.

It is owing to the multitude of the profane, and preposterous,

errors, which have been created by the Protestant rule of faith, that many reformed writers,—with more piety than consistency,—have severely condemned the unrestricted reading of the Bible. Archbishop Bramhall declares, that, “*The unrestricted liberty of reading the Bible is more injurious to religion, than all the restraints of the Catholics.*”—The learned Seldon, more expressive still than Bramhall, asserts, that,—“*These two words ‘Scrutamini Scripturas’ (search the Scriptures) have undone the world. Because Christ spoke to his disciples, therefore must all men, women, and children, read, and interpret, the Scriptures. The text serves only to guess at, which a discreet man may do well. But, it is HIS Scripture, not the Holy Ghost’s.*”—“*The Bible, the Bible,*” says Bishop Hare, quoting the Protestant rule,—“*is the religion of Protestants. And so say all the heretics, and schismatics, that ever were.*”—“*Scripture,*” says the candid Hooker, “*may be abused to any purpose. Thus, it was made by the Presbyterians to prove, that whatsoever we do, if we be not directed by it, the same is sin. Thus, the French Protestants would not pay their rents;—pretending to scruple it, unless their landlords could bring a text to prove, that they should pay them.*”

It is, again, owing to the above reasons, that several of the present learned defenders of the Established Church,—very un-Protestantly,—condemn the distributions of the Bible, as they are now practised by the Bible Societies. “*We conscientiously believe,*” says Dr. Norris, in his Letter to Lord Liverpool, “*that the Bible Society is an institution fraught with danger, not only to our Church, but to the best interests of truth, and unity, throughout the world.*”—The writers of the ‘British Critic,’ the organs of the Established Church, say precisely the same thing. Speaking of the said Society, they remark: “*A new, and moral, power is let loose. . . . Knowledge is power, and the power, which it creates, is a busy, fiery, principle, which, when not pre-engaged on the side of utility, lends itself to mischief, decomposition, and disorder.*”—“*The fashion of the present day,*” they add, “*is to make the Scriptures a pretence for dissension. In those dissensions, every heresy will have its advocate: and with whatever rapidity one false doc-*

trine spreads, with the same rapidity, when the tide turns, will its opposite error run in.—“*To such an extent,*” says Archdeacon Cambridge, “*has the diabolical purpose of spreading impiety been carried, that it is well known, that schools have been established, in which, both children, and adults, are instructed in reading; and the Bible is put into their hands, for the express purpose of perverting the Divine truths, and training them to treat the contents with ridicule, and contempt.*”—Alluding to the chief authors of the aforesaid mischievous designs, the writers of the ‘British Critic’ again say: “*The Socinians are so convinced, that the tendency of the Bible Society is hostile to the Church, that they are willing, even though it circulates the authorised version of the Scriptures, to give it their support. This they consider a temporary sacrifice, made to obtain the greater object,—the ruin of the Establishment, by the dividing processes of the Bible Society.*”

Thus, then, I have pointed out some of the many effects, which result from the character, and application, of the Protestant’s rule of faith. If the maxim be true, which I have laid down, at the opening of this note,—that “the tree is best known by its fruits,”—it, in this case, must evidently seem to follow, that, then, such rule can, neither in religion, piety, or prudence, be considered, as the dictate of the Holy Ghost. For, surely, a rule, which is the source of error, and confusion;—which is made the very basis of incredulity, and irreligion;—a rule, which is susceptible of a thousand interpretations,—which the ignorant *cannot* understand, and which the learned *do not* understand,—surely, such rule can never have been designed, or dictated, by the divine wisdom, as the sole guide of the Christian’s faith, or as the main principle of his security.

(F.) PAGE 22.

On the Necessity of an Infallible Guide.

There is not any principle in the order of religion, more undeniable, than that the divine truths, delivered to us by our

great Redeemer, are essentially *One*, and ordained to continue invariably such, till the end of time. Saint Paul compares the unity of these sacred objects to the Unity of the Godhead itself: "*There is ONE Lord,*" he says, "*and ONE Faith.*" In fact, *unity*, in the order of reason itself, is the necessary appendage of every truth.

In a matter, therefore, so vitally momentous to the Christian as the belief, and profession, of this "*One Faith,*"—it cannot be doubted, but that the wisdom of God has established, not only those provisions, by which the sacred *depositum* may for ever be preserved inviolate,—but, those *means*, moreover, by which men may come to the sure knowledge of its doctrines. It is accordingly, for these two great ends, that St. Paul informs us, the divine wisdom has instituted in his Church so many offices, and gifts, and graces, "*for the perfecting,*" he says, "*of the saints; for the work of the ministry, &c.—until we all meet together in the UNITY OF FAITH and the knowledge of the Son of God.*"

Here, then, occurs that great question, which, beyond any other, divides the Catholic and the Protestant,—and which, hence, has often been denominated, "*The Question of Questions.*" It is,—to decide, *what those means precisely are*, which Christ Jesus has established for the preservation of unity in his Church, and for the safe discovery of its truths by the faithful. "*Those means,*" says the Protestant, "*are the Bible;—and the Bible, interpreted by the dictates of each one's private judgment, and capacity.*" "*Those means,*" says the Catholic, "*are, indeed, the Bible,—but, the Bible, interpreted by the superior judgment, and authority of the Church.*" "*All Religions,*" says Leslie, "*and all sects, in the world, are built upon the dispute betwixt these two,—whether men are to govern themselves by their own private judgment in their faith, and religion; or to be determined by the authority of others.*" (On Private Judgment.) Such exactly is the state of the question. It is for the good sense of the reader to decide, whether the Protestant, or the Catholic, method of preserving the unity of faith, or of coming to the knowledge of the true faith, is the best adapted to the important purposes.

In regard of the Bible itself, I have shown already, in various

parts of these notes,—how little,—from its obscurity, and its many perplexing difficulties,—it is calculated, when interpreted by the suggestions of private judgment, to produce either unity of faith,—or to impart so much as *any prudent* conviction to the mind. So far from producing unity, it is made the source itself, and the basis, of disunity, and error. Even the very doctrines of the highest moment, are, in it, expressed,—some of them—in language so ambiguous,—if not, seemingly, so contradictory,—as to perplex, and confound, men of the brightest talents, and distinguished learning. Thus, take, for example, the texts, which relate to the Divinity of Christ, and those, which regard his human nature. These,—some of them,—appear completely at variance with each other,—presenting, on one side, the plainest proofs in favour of his Divine character;—on the other, strong arguments against it. For, although the Sacred Being says: “*I, and the Father, are ONE,*”—yet, He says equally: “*The Father is greater than I am.*” The pious believer appeals with confidence to the former text to prove, that He is God. The Socinian, and the Unitarian, with just equal confidence, appeal to the latter, to prove that He is not God. Now, which of the two interpretations is the right one? As the Bible itself,—being a dead letter,—is mute, and silent, so, of course, the Bible itself cannot decide the important question. It is the interpreter only,—the private judgment of each individual,—that, *alone*, according to the rule of Protestantism, must do this. Thus, Mr. Blanco White,—the hero, but yesterday, of the Established Church, but, now, a deserter from it,—informs us, in his recent work, (*Observations on Heresy,*) that “*the Study of the New Testament ALONE had made him a Unitarian.*” His case is common among multitudes of the most learned Protestants. Among these, the numbers are awfully great, who, like Blanco White, reject the Divinity of our Saviour, upon the alleged testimony of the Bible. It is so, too, in regard of many other fundamental dogmas of religion. There are multitudes, every where, who, upon the pretended authority of the Bible, reject one or other of these divine revelations. So that, in fact, the Bible, of itself, so far from producing any unity of faith, or from conducting to the sure knowledge of the truth, is made to produce

the quite contrary effects,—is made the very proof, and principle, of error, and confusion. So that the truth is:—*Of itself*, the Bible is not the ground of faith. For, what forms a man's faith, is not the material letter of the Bible, but the interpretation, or the sense, which he puts upon it. Hence, Coleridge, with much good sense, remarks: "*The position, that the mere text of the Bible is the sole ground of Christian faith is quite untenable against the Romanists: it entirely destroys the condition of a Church. . . . Had I been a Papist,*" he adds, "*I should not have wished for a more vanquishable opponent in controversy, than Chillingworth:*"—whose principle of believing is, nevertheless, the genuine, and acknowledged, rule of Protestantism.

Such, then, being the case, that the Bible, although interpreted by the best dictates of private judgment, does not produce, either that *unity* of belief, which is the characteristic of the true religion; nor that firm conviction of certitude, which is the best ingredient of Christian happiness,—so it is unreasonable to suppose, that it was ever, in the design of God, ordained to be the sole rule of our belief, or the only ground of our security. If such be indeed his design,—how passing strange ought it not to appear, that it not only fails completely in these regards,—but that it is made the very proof of the errors; and the foundation of the very evils, which it is intended to prevent? This, surely, were forming a very false, and improper, notion of the divine wisdom. The case, therefore, in relation to the Bible is this,—that, if God had designed the sacred volume to be the sole rule, and director, of our faith,—either He would have exalted our understandings to the measure of its difficulties; or else, he would have lowered, and proportioned, its difficulties to the present measure of our capacities.

Wherefore, it being thus evident, that the Protestant rule of faith neither produces, nor is calculated to produce, that unity, which is the appendage of the true religion, nor that assured, and firm, conviction, which the nature of *faith* requires,—it consequently follows, that,—since both these blessings have been provided for by the divine wisdom,—and both of them are essentially required,—so, there must, of course,

exist some other principle for their attainment, and support, more powerful, and efficacious, than the alleged principle, or rule, of Protestantism. It must be a principle, or rule,—for, such alone can produce the aforesaid effects,—which distinctly, and clearly, points out the real, and true, doctrines of revelation;—which,—being founded upon the divine promises,—contains within itself the elements of perennial inviolability; and which admits neither the misgivings of doubt, nor the apprehensions of insecurity;—for these, as I have said already, are feelings, entirely repugnant to the virtue of *Christian Faith*.

Accordingly, consulting the constitution of the Church, and the *means* which its divine Founder has established for the preservation of its Unity; and for the instruction, and guidance, of its members,—we find, that the following were the methods, which He adopted. He appointed his Apostles the rulers, and guardians, of the divine institution; and the pastors, and teachers, of the faithful. For these important purposes, He solemnly invested them, not only with a high degree of authority, but with a measure of authority, similar to His own,—assuring them, moreover, that Himself would remain always with them,—and with their successors equally,—till the end of time,—directing them to guide their flocks, and to teach mankind, precisely as if He Himself were performing those sacred functions. “*All power,*” he said to them, “*is given to Me, in heaven, and on earth. Go, therefore, and teach all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded: and behold, I am with you, ALL DAYS, to the end of the world.*” In like manner, he said again: “*I will ask the Father; and He will give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you, FOR EVER,—the Spirit of Truth. The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things. When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will teach you all truth.*” The import of these texts is obvious. They manifestly imply, that the pastors of the Church,—who are the successors of the Apostles,—are, just equally with the Apostles themselves, constituted the guides, and teachers, of the faithful, and the organs of the true religion;—and this, too, through every revolving age,—

with the positive assurance, moreover, that they shall never err. Such is the constitution of the Church of Christ,—a divine tribunal, invested with the authority, both to teach mankind, and to transmit for ever,—unchanged, and unimpaired,—those same doctrines, which were once delivered to the Apostles. To contend, that a Church, thus founded by our wise Redeemer, thus fenced by his promises, and cemented by his Blood ;—to contend, that such a Church could ever either err, or perish,—this is, indeed, little better than an act of impiety, and irreligion. And hence, therefore, the profaneness of that sentence in the Book of Homilies, which declares, that, “*for the space of 800 years, and more, the whole of Christendom was at once drowned in abominable idolatry,*” &c.—a sentence this, which, to the feelings of every temperate Protestant, must now appear, as disgustingly horrible, as it is grossly absurd, and inconsistent.

The establishment of a tribunal, invested with a divine commission to teach, and with the authority to command, implies, of course, as a necessary consequence, the obligation, in the subject, of acquiescing in its decrees, and of submitting to its commands. Accordingly, such, also, is the positive injunction of its divine Founder,—expressed in terms, as plain, and forcible, as any thing that is contained in the sacred pages. Having, then, conferred upon his Apostles their important delegation, He, now, said to them: “*He that heareth you, heareth Me: and he, that despiseth you, despiseth Him, that sent Me.*” —He, elsewhere, declares:—“*He, that will not hear the Church, let him be, as the heathen, and the publican.*” He, again, adds:—“*He, that believeth not, shall be damned.*” Saint Paul repeats the same declaration. For, after having ranked heresies, and sects, among the works of the flesh, he then says:—“*They who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*” And he adds: “*Although we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel to you, save that, which we have preached, let him be accursed.*”—These, and such as these, are the injunctions, dictated by the wisdom, and justice, of Almighty God, in order to engage men to believe his divine doctrines, and to obey that authority, which he has instituted in his Church. In reality, if the true religion be,—as it cer-

tainly is,—*but One* ;—and if men are, *all*, under the threatenings of damnation, commanded to believe its doctrines,—it is, in this case, plain,—no truth can be more obvious,—that, then, the very justice itself of God must have provided some *means*,—some competent means,—some living, commanding *Oracle*,—both to point out, and proclaim, the truth, and to secure the faithful from the artifices, and illusions, of error. Without such precaution, it is impossible to reconcile the order of the aforesaid economy, and injunctions, either with His justice, His wisdom, or His mercy. For, *without it*, considering the weakness of the human mind, and the obscurity of the Bible ;—the pride of reason, and the incomprehensibility of the sacred mysteries,—*without it*,—never could men attain any assured knowledge of the true doctrines of revelation ; nor yet, any prudent conviction, that their faith, or belief, is right. And hence, therefore, of course, the *necessity*,—and, consequently, the establishment,—of an *infallible tribunal*. “ *If, indeed,*” says the candid Protestant minister, Starke,—“ *if it be the wish of men, that the Bible should not become useless, and even dangerous ;—if, on the contrary, it ought to be a fixed rule of faith, and conduct,—it ought, then, essentially to be accompanied by a tribunal, established to fix, and decide, its sense. And this tribunal, in order to perform such office, should be invested with an INFALLIBLE authority. Such has, in all ages, been the opinion of the most eminent, and distinguished, members of the Church of Christ.*”—Saint Austin, indeed, declares,—as I have stated, elsewhere,—that, “ he would not believe in the Gospel itself, if the authority of the Church did not compel him to do so.” Pointing out the necessity of this authority, he remarks :—“ *Disputes must necessarily be endless, where men appeal only to the Scriptures to decide them. In this case, each party may grant, and deny ; and deny, and grant, for ever. The victory, in all such contests, must remain always doubtful ; and the effect will be, that each side will claim it equally ; and even continue, each, the more fixed in its own opinion. And what, therefore, is the method, which, on the occasion of such contests, men ought, in their prudence, to adopt ? Why, let them look out for that AUTHORITY,—for those Pastors, to whom the depositum of faith has been con-*

fixed, and to whom the Scriptures themselves belong. . . . It is from these, that we receive, both the true Scriptures, and the true sense of the Scriptures."

It is a matter of curiosity, as well as of interest, to trace the variations, the inconsistencies, and contradictions, of the Protestant Churches, in relation to a great variety of their doctrines, conduct, and opinions. It is so in regard to the present subject. The very essence of Protestantism,—as we have seen,—is the *rejection* of authority in matters of faith. The assumption of such prerogative is, by its charter, and by the most solemn, and authentic, of all its decrees, declared, and condemned, as an act of tyranny, usurpation, and injustice,—the violation of the rights, both of religion, and of reason. Behold, therefore, now, the inconsistency, and the contradiction. No sooner had the leaders of the revolution contrived, by their violence, and multifarious artifices, to detach great numbers of deluded beings from their parent institute, and to organise them into sects, and churches,—than, straight, they undertook to recall, and re-establish, that very instrument, which, hitherto, they had been labouring, — too successfully, — to destroy. By an act of the grossest violation of their own principles, they now recalled *authority*. They now formed, and erected, tribunals, upon the very plan of that, which they had so loudly declared tyrannical, and unjust. They composed, and issued, creeds, confessions, canons, &c.; — and along with these, all the ordinary accompaniments of the highest spiritual power,—excommunications, oaths, censures, &c. It is so, in every place, where Protestantism has erected an establishment, called "a Church." It is so in this country, where the Established Church arrogates to itself the *authority*, not only of deciding the Articles of Faith,—but, moreover, of compelling its Clergy to *swear*, that they, "*ex animo*," believe them. It does this, too,—which is still more arbitrary,—although its Articles are such,—so ambiguous, and obscure,—that, by the acknowledgment of several of its own learned members,—such as Paley, Blackburn, Balguy, &c.,—it is utterly impossible to understand them.*—Such is the conduct of the Anglican

* Jortin says;—"There are propositions in the Articles, and Liturgy, which no man of common sense among us believes."—Tracts.

"The Articles of the National Church," says the eloquent Robert Hall,

Church,—as well as of some other reformed Churches. These, all of them, arrogate to themselves that same authority, which they condemn in the Catholic Church, as tyrannical and un-Christian,—seeking shelter under the miserable ruins of the very rampart, which it is their great boast to have destroyed. So much for Protestant consistency.*

However, although the aforesaid conduct of these Churches is a gross violation of their own fundamental principles, yet it strikingly serves to prove the truth of the proposition, which I have laid down,—namely, that *authority alone* is the band of Christian unity, and the best guardian of truth. In reality, if authority is deemed essential, in every case, where order is to

“are almost effaced from the minds of its members, because they have been long neglected, or denied, by the majority of those who occupy its pulpits.”—Reviews, &c.

* *“That the Catholics,”* says Blanco White, *“believing their Church infallible, should fence its Creed with every thing, that can secure to it the awe, and the attachment, of both the clergy, and laity, is perfectly natural, and intelligible. But, that Protestants should continue to imitate the same conduct, in respect to Creeds; to interpretations of Scripture, in which all acknowledge there may be errors, is one of the strangest inconsistencies, which the history of civilised nations attests.”—(‘Observations on Heresy.’)*

“How extremely feeble,” he adds, *“are the attempts of those Protestants, who wish to find a Church somewhere, which, though liable to error, is, nevertheless, to settle our doubts, as if it were infallible! Yet, such things are seriously proposed by men of talents, and learning.”*

The like sensible, and just, observations appeared lately, in one of the best written of our periodical papers:—*“The essence of Protestantism is, that it appeals from PUBLIC authority to PRIVATE conscience. It cannot, therefore, erect tribunals to prescribe a particular Creed to that conscience. The whole justification of its secession from the elder establishment is in the appeal to individual conscience against human authority. It is a suicidal absurdity to attempt to appeal back again to human authority from individual conscience. . . To set up one religion, as true; and to brand another, as false, by law, is to set up a human jurisdiction above the Protestant Court of Conscience. No Christian sect can do this, with consistency, but the Roman Catholics. If Protestants persist in doing it, they pave the way for what they profess most to dread,—THE RETURN OF POPEY. Let us not halt between two opinions. If we are Protestants, we renounce human authority in matters of conscience. If we are to bow the knee to authority, let us bow it to that, which can claim the best title by prescription. LET US RETURN TO THE INFALLIBLE CHURCH. THERE IS NO MEDIUM.”*

be maintained, and disorder suppressed ;—if, in the economy, both of civil, social, and domestic, life, it is the source, and foundation, of harmony, security, and comfort ;—if it is even the chief principle of our customs, ways, habits, and opinions, —why, then, should it not, also, appear, and *really be*, just equally requisite, in regard of the great interests of religion ? It is, in fact, here,—considering the nature of religion ; the incomprehensibility of its mysteries ; and the severity of its precepts,—it is here, much more than in any other case, that the influences of authority are demanded. Or why, again—if, in the civil order of things, we have tribunals, and judges, to explain the laws, and to watch over their observance,—why, then, in the awful, and divine, order of spiritual things, ought not such institutions to appear,—or rather, again, *be*,—still more important, and essential ? Whoever, indeed, denies this, must, consequently, maintain, that, what is wise, right, and even necessary, in human concerns,—is, in the sacred business of salvation, useless, and improper. Surely, good sense must feel the absurdity of so strange a proposition. But, if so,—then the consequence is,—that, precisely as authority is required in the order of human things,—as, in these, it is the principle of peace, harmony, and subordination,—so, also, and for the like purposes, it is essentially requisite, in the divine system of religion. Its character, too,—in order to produce its necessary effects,—the unity of Faith, and the stability of Christian certitude,—must be such as I have described, in the series of this illustration,—that is, it must be *unerring and infallible*,—since no other kind of authority can possibly produce those benefits. All belief, which is not founded upon the basis of *this* authority, can be, in reality, and, if strictly analysed,—no other than opinion, and conjecture,—*a mere perhaps, and a doubtful probability, at best.*

(G.) PAGE 24.

The Protestant Translations of the Bible.

The Bible, unfaithfully translated, is no longer the divine *Word of God*, but the perverted *Word of Man*. This is a truth, which no one will call in question. Accordingly, let the reader, by this maxim, form his judgment of the translations, which the Reformers,—and, long after them, their successors,—made of the sacred volume. The following is briefly the account, which those men have mutually given of each other's performances. I have extracted it, abridged, from the Errata of Ward,—who, himself, had carefully extracted it from the works of the alleged translators.

The Translation of Luther.—Of this Zuinglius says,—severely reproaching the great apostle: “*Thou corruptest, O Luther, the Word of God. Thou art known to be an open, and notorious, perverter of the Holy Scripture. How much are we ashamed of thee now, whom we had once so much respected!*” (L. De Sac.) Emser, and Staphylus, have imputed to him upwards of a thousand heretical corruptions, in his translation of the New Testament alone.

The Zuinglian Translation.—Luther not only condemns this, but calls its translators, “*a set of fools, asses, antichrists, and impostors.*”

The Translation of Ecolampadius, and the Basil Divines.—Beza denounces this, as “*in many places, absolutely wicked; and differing wholly from the dictates of the Holy Ghost.*”

The Translation of Castalio.—Beza, again, pronounces this,—“*sacrilegious, wicked, and downright pagan.*”—In the work, which Castalio wrote in his own defence, he makes the following observation: “*Some reject our Latin, and French, translations of the Bible, not only as unlearned, but as wicked; and repugnant, in many places, to the spirit of the Holy Ghost.*”

The Translation of Calvin.—Molinæus, describing this, says of it: “*Calvin makes the texts of the Gospel leap up and*

down. *He does violence to the letter, and makes additions to the text.*"

The Translation of Beza.—Of this, Molinæus says:—*"Beza actually changes the text."* And Castalio declares, that *"it would require a large volume to mark down the multitude of errors, which swarm in Beza's translation."*

Such as these were the translations of the Bible, composed by the first, and most distinguished, leaders of the Reformation; and such the opinions, which those men reciprocally entertained of each other's labours,—reprobating each other, mutually, as the corrupters of the Word of God.

In regard of the early translations, which were undertaken by the English Reformers,—these were not one jot more faithful than those of the foreign Churches. They are, for the most part, the bad translations of false translations,—ungrammatical, crude, vulgar, and often completely unintelligible; besides being, like those of Luther, Beza, &c., replete with errors, and disgraced by the grossest corruptions. Such, even as this, is the character, which the candour of many Protestant writers has not hesitated to give of them. For example:—

The Clergy of the Diocese of Lincoln, addressing James I., say to him: *"Our translation takes away from the text, and adds to the text. It obscures, and changes, the meaning of the Holy Ghost."* They call it, still farther,—*"A translation, which is absurd, and senseless; perverting, in many places, the meaning of the Holy Ghost."* Hence, says Mr. Burgess, a candid, and learned, member of the Establishment,—*"How shall I approve, under my hand, a translation, which has so many omissions, and many additions; which, sometimes, obscures; sometimes, perverts, the sense;—being sometimes senseless, sometimes contrary?"*—Another learned, and conscientious, writer, addressing the Lords of the Council, and petitioning them to order a new translation, says: *"The translation, which is now in England, is full of errors."* He tells the Bishops, that *"their public translations of the Scriptures into English is such, that it perverts the text of the Old Testament in eight hundred and forty-eight places, and that it causes millions to reject the New Testament."*—*"Our translators of the Bible,"* says Hooker,—and the fact is equally admitted by

many learned modern defenders of the establishment,—Doctors Marsh, Mant, &c.—“*our translators of the Bible did not, at first, express themselves with sufficient precision. Their minds were biassed by certain prepossessions, in favour of particular opinions.*” Such, in short, was the state of the early English Bibles, that James I., struck with their corruptions, declared, that, “*He should never see a Bible well translated into English.*”

Thus, then, by the acknowledgments, in the first place, of the authors of the Reformation; and by the admission, next, of our own English divines,—the Bible, which, at the beginnings, and early periods, of the Reformation, was proposed, and palmed upon the public, as the divine, and pure, *Word of God*, was, after all, and in reality, no other than the falsified, and adulterated, *word of man*. And yet, it is upon this foundation chiefly,—supported, indeed, by insults, and misrepresentations,—that the religions, and churches, of Protestantism are erected. It was by the circulation of false translations, pronounced confidently as the dictates of the Holy Ghost, that the reformers succeeded so triumphantly in seducing men from the parent Church, in destroying the unity of faith, and in disturbing the harmony of social life.

(H.) PAGE 26.

On the means of finding out the true religion.

The first principle of knowledge is the *wish* to know. The first step, therefore, towards the discovery of the true religion is the *wish* to find it out. This is a wish, which ought to lie close to the heart of every individual, who is not well assured, that he does already enjoy this blessing. The reason is obvious:—All the benefits of our redemption are but *covenanted* things,—dependent wholly upon our compliance with the *terms*, upon which its divine Author has, in his wisdom, thought proper to bestow them. Now, certain it is, that, among all these various terms, or conditions, there is not any one, that is more positively ordained, and more strictly required, than that

E

men—if they really look for salvation—shall believe the doctrines, and be the members, of His Church. This point is even so incontestable, that it forms a prominent article in the Creed of the Established Church, “*Whosoever*,” says this Church,—adopting the sentence of the Athanasian Creed,—“*whosoever wishes to be saved, ABOVE ALL THINGS, IT IS NECESSARY, that he hold the Catholic faith; which faith, except every one do keep whole, and undefiled, WITHOUT DOUBT, he shall perish everlastingly.*” These awful words are, in reality, no other than the echo of that express declaration of our Saviour, —“*He, who believeth not, shall be damned.*” Indeed, whoever, considers the subject attentively, cannot but be sensible, that, whatsoever is repugnant to the order of things, which the wisdom of God has established, must, of course, be highly displeasing to Him; and cannot, for this reason, form, either the foundation of Christian hope, or be the source of enlightened confidence. Hence, I repeat it:—*The wish* to find out the true religion,—wheresoever men have not the positive assurance, that they do actually enjoy this blessing,—is a *wish*, that should animate all the best feelings of their solicitude, and industry.

If men did, indeed, entertain this holy *wish*,—if they valued the truth, as much as they do their worldly interests,—as much as they do their liberty, their health, and so on,—soon, in such case, the happy discovery would be made. A sincere, and ardent, wish,—a real, and right, good-will,—are principles so powerful, as almost by themselves suffice to attain any thing, that is not impossible. Thus, how often, for example, do we see men, in every sphere of life,—even the ignorant, and the vulgar,—when pushed on by any strong affection, surmount difficulties, apparently the most insurmountable? How often, when stimulated by the love of ease, interest, or reputation, have we seen persons in the lowest ranks of society, make discoveries, alike useful, and astonishing, in all the various arts, and sciences? Nay, how often do we remark, that even children themselves acquire,—and this, without any great difficulty,—not only the elements of learning, but the knowledge, moreover, of the properties, character, and uses, of an endless multitude of objects? The fact is,—that the acquirement of know-

ledge is seldom a difficult task, wherever men have the will, and the wish, to obtain it. But, alas, here lies the misfortune: The love of truth, and the desire to find out the true religion, are, with the generality of mankind, in these days, but secondary considerations,—under currents, at best, which seldom rise to any beneficial use.

It is a reflection, too, which, not less than the foregoing, ought to confound the indolence, both of the thoughtless, and the thoughtful, Christian,—that, among the Pagans themselves, we read of multitudes, who, in quest of learning, or of what they called “Wisdom,” undertook, even at the risk of their lives, the most fatiguing, and laborious, journeys into various, and far distant, nations; leaving behind them their families, their friends, and all the comforts of domestic life. Such was the case, particularly among the Greeks, who, impelled by a noble curiosity, travelled amid dangers, and every kind of inconvenience, and privation, into Egypt, India, and over various other nations.—And do we not see, at present, although it is for purposes far less noble than the foregoing,—do we not see multitudes,—nay, millions, of Christians, travelling over every part of the globe; and sailing over every sea, heedless alike of dangers, and braving the fury of storms, and tempests,—and all this for what? Why, not like the Pagan travellers to bring home with them a stock of wisdom,—but a stock, it may be, of cinnamon, and pepper!—at all events, a stock of trifling somethings to promote their temporal comforts. There is, again, in these considerations, much to confound the negligence of the Christian; and to render him ashamed of his own indifference to the paramount interests of the life to come.—But, once more, so it is:—Small indeed is the number of those, who, now, give themselves the trouble,—I do not say, to traverse continents, and seas, in quest of wisdom, or to find out the truth,—but even so much as to reflect at all upon these awful, and momentous, subjects.

The next step, which, after the *wish* to discover the true religion, is required for this vital purpose, is the cultivation of those *dispositions* of the heart, and of those faculties of the mind, which prepare the way for so great a blessing. These, in fact,—the dispositions of the heart, and mind,—are the

qualities, which, in relation to every thing, connected with the securities of salvation, are, of course, of the highest moment.

Although various dispositions,—such as piety, and the spirit of prayer;—such as candour, sincerity, and the freedom from prejudice, partiality, and prepossession,—although dispositions such as these are required in every seeker after the truth,—yet, the disposition, which, perhaps beyond any other, is the surest means of coming to the knowledge of the divine object is the virtue of *humility*,—that is, a deep sense of our own weakness, and of our utter inability to measure the mysterious ways of God. It is, in fact, upon the basis of *humility*, that faith, and the whole fabric of religion, principally repose. The first law of Christianity is the strict injunction to submit our reason to word of God, and our wills to his command.

That human reason is weak; that we live here in the midst of shades, and darkness,—these are truths, which all are compelled, and ready, to admit; and which none admit so readily, as those, who are the most enlightened. But, in the order of religion above all, that man is the wisest, who feels, that he is not wise;—that individual, the best philosopher, who considers himself no philosopher at all. The man, who is confident in his own talents, or his own learning,—who pretends to decide, what God can, or cannot, do, (this is the common case with the Protestant, in relation to some of our mysteries, particularly transubstantiation,) that man is much farther removed from the discovery of the truth, than the humble Christian, who, sensible of the poverty of human reason, is diffident in his own abilities. In the former, God traces that principle,—*pride*,—which, rendering him unworthy of the divine regard, unfits him, therefore, for the grace, and the knowledge, of the truth. In the latter, He beholds that pious docility, that holy diffidence, which, being the best claim to His favour, best prepare the mind for the sacred treasure. “*God resisteth the proud, and giveth his grace to the humble.*” If, then, impressed with this Christian disposition, the Protestant would seriously undertake to find out the true religion; and to ascertain, which, among the numberless churches, that divide the public, is really the true Church of Christ,—with this disposition,—accompanied, indeed, with those, which I have also stated,—the happy dis-

covery would be made; and, conducted by the beams of grace, the inquirer would find himself, ere long, arrived at the threshold of the blissful sanctuary.

The above dispositions, however, do not directly, or of themselves, impart the knowledge of religion: they but *prepare* the mind for the enjoyment of this blessing, and render its attainment certain. It is, consequently, necessary, that the pious inquirer should, still farther, make it the subject of his study to ascertain precisely, what that *direct means* is, which conducts *immediately* to this attainment.—I have, indeed, discussed this question, in the preceding Illustration. But, as the point is so important, I will briefly repeat a few of the considerations, which I have there suggested.

It is, then, a circumstance, which cannot reasonably be called in question,—that the wisdom of God, establishing an order of religion for the salvation of his creatures, and commanding, that they shall, *all*, under the pain of damnation, believe, and profess, its doctrines,—under these circumstances, nothing can be more evident, than that, therefore, He must have instituted some *means*,—even some effectual *means*,—by which men might securely come to the knowledge of these sacred objects. It were even an insult to His justice itself to suppose, that He would,—or could,—declare any thing essential to salvation, and yet not place the sacred object within the reach of all such as sincerely sought to make it theirs. The *means*, moreover, established for this salutary purpose, should be such as corresponds, both to characters of mankind, and to the nature of Christian *faith*. It should be *plain*, and *simple*;—because *all* men, alike, are imperiously commanded to believe in all the mysteries of religion. It should be *powerful*, and *efficient*,—because it is the essential property of faith to be devoid of doubts, and hesitations. Such,—as founded upon the wisdom, the mercy, and the justice itself, of God,—should be the nature of the principle, which is, alone, suited to conduct mankind, with safety, to the knowledge of the true religion.

Now, that the *means*, adopted, and recommended, by the Protestant Churches, is not of the above description,—this is a point, which I have repeatedly shown, in the series of these Illustrations. So far, indeed, is this from being the case, that,

as experience demonstrates, it is the *rule itself* of Protestantism, that forms the alleged proof of every kind of error ; and that constitutes the grounds of all that confusion ;—of all those disputes, and contradictions ; of all that instability, and fluctuation, which divide, and distract, all the sects of the Reformation. The Bible is, in fact, too deep, and difficult, a book for the far greater portion of mankind to understand it at all ; whilst reason,—inconstant, and ever-varying element,—is too feeble a thing to constitute the basis, either of real certitude, or of wise conviction. The Protestant, who grounds his belief upon his own rule of faith,—the dictates of his own reason,—grounds it upon the basis of a reed ; or, as the learned Hagel expresses it, still better,—“*upon the basis of a NULLITY.*” It is for these reasons precisely, that,—tired of their own doubts, and perplexities ; distressed at the awful incertitude, produced by the principles of the Reformation,—we have lately seen so many Protestants, both in Germany, and Switzerland, return to the bosom of the Catholic Church ; and these, too, some of the most learned, and distinguished, characters of those countries.

It is manifest, then, that the Protestant rule of faith does neither produce,—nor is calculated to produce,—I do not say, any unity of belief,—that is impossible,—but that certitude of knowledge, and firm conviction, which are the essential ingredients of *faith*. The consequence must, therefore, be, that,—since these effects are necessary, there must, of course, exist some other principle, adapted better, and more effectually, both to their attainment, and support. This is a proposition, which no consistent Christian will contest. Accordingly, what is this important principle ? Why, if it be once proved, that the rule of Protestantism is inadequate to produce the aforesaid effects,—it then follows, that this important principle can be no other than that, which regulates the belief of the Catholic—the principle of a divine, and *unerring, authority*. In reality, between this, and the rule of Protestantism,—or between an infallible tribunal, and the tribunal of private judgment, there exists no medium. The proof, which evinces the insufficiency of the latter, establishes clearly the necessity, and therefore the existence, of the former. In fact, it is the only kind of tribunal,

that is adapted, either to the unity, and preservation, of the divine truths of religion; or to the weaknesses, and wants of men. Its decrees being received as the dictates of the Holy Ghost, are, of course, every where revered; and as they are expressed in the plain terms of ordinary language, so, also, they are every where understood. Thus, the doctrines of faith are preserved inviolate; the knowledge of them is rendered easy; and the convictions of their truth are unmolested by any doubts.

By way of pointing out the comparative characters, and effects, of the two tribunals, or rules, of faith, Fénelon makes use of the following apologue. "Imagine to yourself," he says, "a poor, infirm paralytic, anxious to escape out of his bed, because the house, in which he is confined, is on fire. He addresses himself for aid to the persons, that stand around him. In reply to his eager entreaties, these only say to him:—*'Make haste: get up: run away, and save your life.'*—Meanwhile, there comes an individual, who, seeing the wretched invalid, says to him: *'Leave the thing to me: I will take you in my arms; and carry you safely out of the danger.'* What, in such case as this, will the helpless creature do? Will he listen to the persons, who exhort him to do, what he feels he cannot do; or to the charitable individual, who, alone, engages to lend him that assistance, which is suited to the state of his infirmity? Why, anxious to save his life,—behold, at once, and without any farther reasoning, he confides himself to the latter; and gratefully resigns himself to his arms.—Well, thus precisely it is in relation to religion, with the prudent, and humble Christian, who is sensible of his own weakness, and incapacity. He does not listen, with any degree of confidence, to the men, who cry out to him: *'Read: reason: judge, and determine for yourself.'* He feels too forcibly, that, although he may both read, and reason, yet, with his poor, and slender, capacity, he can neither judge with sufficient wisdom, nor decide with sufficient certitude. He is, therefore, consoled, and cheered, by the voice of the Church,—that tender parent,—which kindly says to him: *'Do but feel for your own weakness: be humble, and docile: confide in the mercy of God, who has not left you without succour; nor without the means of*

going securely to Him. Only leave the matter to me; and I will carry, and convey, you, in safety, in my arms.' Nothing, surely, can be wiser,—nor more simple, than these means of coming to the knowledge of the truth. The ignorant, and the weak, may thus, without either book, or Bible,—without either reasoning, or discussion,—find out, at once, the sacred treasure; and discover, where stands the real sanctuary of the true religion.—Be the Protestant ever so partial to his own sect, or so prejudiced against Catholicity,—yet, if he is ignorant, and illiterate,—if he reason with himself at all,—he cannot but be sensible, how false, and even absurd, is that principle of his religion, which invites him to do, what,—just like the poor paralytic,—he feels he cannot do;—which declares, and constitutes, him,—illiterate, and untalented, being,—the sole judge of the mysterious doctrines of revelation, and the arbiter of his own belief. Neither, again, can he, in like manner,—if he consider the thing attentively,—help feeling the charity of that Church, which, relieving him from the process of a discussion, of which he is utterly incapable, directs him only, in the confidence of her superior wisdom, to listen to her voice; and, in the humility of his heart,—*believe*. The very ignorance of the sincere, and virtuous, Christian, who is thus guided, and enlightened, becomes a real, and infallible, science; and he sees clearly the error of that rule; and the inconsistency of those teachers, that would exalt him,—as they profess to do,—into the judge of what he is wholly incompetent to decide."

The foregoing reflections may appear to apply,—as, in fact, they do apply,—to the less instructed, or more ignorant, portions of society. However, the same things nearly might be said, concerning the well educated, and the learned themselves. For, these,—as I have elsewhere remarked,—ought, equally with the ignorant, to be humble: and should feel,—as, if they reason, they *must* feel,—how weak, and slender, are all human talents; and how little they are fitted to produce in any mind the solid, permanent, convictions of real, and undoubting, certitude. Thus, is it not an undeniable fact, that, among all the various orders of men in the Protestant world, there are none, who differ from each other so much, as they do;—none, who contradict each other so notoriously;—none, who entertain so

many doubts, and difficulties, upon every question of religion;—none, who have broached so many false opinions, or defended so many theories, and systems, alike impious, or absurd? Of great multitudes of these men,—and even of the very authors themselves of Protestantism,—it would be true to say, what Cicero has said of the old Pagan philosophers,—that, “*there is nothing so absurd, as what some of them have taught.*” Certain, indeed, it is, that nothing can be more preposterous, or even more profane, than what is contained in the works of multitudes of these men. Again, therefore, the consequence is, that the learned, as well as the unlearned, stand in need of some guide to direct them,—of some authority to check their pride,—of some principle to settle their disputes, and to allay the uneasinesses of their incertitudes, and doubts;—blessings these, which it were vain to look for, under the *consistent* application of the rule of Protestantism;—blessings, which can exist no where, but in the sanctuary of the Catholic Church.

Besides the general precept, which commands every individual to profess the true religion; and, consequently, to be prudently assured, that he already enjoys the happiness of knowing, which the true religion is;—besides that general precept, it is, moreover, the strict, and paramount, duty of every Protestant to ground his belief upon the convictions, resulting from the process of serious examination, and comparison: “*Examine all things:*” such is the fundamental, and first, law of the Reformation;—insomuch that the Protestant, who believes in any one of the Protestant Churches, without having made such examination, believes blindly, and inconsistently;—is a direct violator of his own most essential principles. Accordingly,—supposing him to be a member of the Established Church,—he is strictly bound, before he believes its doctrines, to have examined them; and by the process of assiduous care, and investigation, to have convinced himself, that they certainly are divine. For this purpose, he ought,—and is, in order to be consistent, *obliged*,—to have compared them with the doctrines of the other reformed Churches. For, these,—all of them,—just equally, as does the Established Church,—proclaim their Creeds divine;—declare, that they are, each, clearly founded upon the Scriptures, and confirmed by the sanctions of the

Holy Ghost. Such are the alleged pretensions of all, and each, of the Protestant Churches, and Protestant sects. Therefore,—since here the claims are all equal, and alike,—it, consequently, becomes the duty of the aforesaid believer, ere he admit his thirty-nine Articles, to have compared them carefully with the articles, or doctrines, of these various institutions. The labour, indeed, would be great; but his own principles imperiously command him to undertake the task.

The examination, however, which, to every Protestant, should, beyond every other, appear the most necessary, and important, is that, which relates to the grounds, and doctrines, of the Catholic, and parent, Church. This great establishment, every Protestant knows, was, but a few years past, the sole religion of this country; the Church of his forefathers; and the asylum of many holy, and distinguished, characters. It possesses, too, a variety of striking, and inviting, features, to which no other establishment can pretend to allege even so much as the slenderest claim. Such, for example, are its *unity*,—linking all its members, throughout the universe, in one, and the same, belief;—its *antiquity*,—reaching down from the earliest ages of Christianity;—its *universality*,—diffused over every enlightened region of the globe;—its *sanctity*,—being the seat, and the nursery, of the saints, and martyrs.—Such, then, and many such as these, being the characteristics of the Catholic Church, it should not,—*cannot*,—but appear, to every thoughtful, and prudent, Protestant, a strict duty to examine its claims with serious, and impartial, care. His principles urgently demand all this. They bid him view, moreover, and study well, the character of that great convulsion, which, tearing his ancestors from the rock of this Church, formed the basis of the new order of religions, which are now erected upon its ruins. For, unless he can wisely convince himself, that the revolution, and apostacy, which then took place, were dictated by piety, and founded upon truth;—then, again, his own present rejection of the ancient institute is,—according to his own maxims,—a violation of the laws of prudence, and consistency; and an evil, pregnant with the most awful consequences. The subject is, indeed, one, which invites, and requires, his most serious care.

There are, it is true, various unhappy causes, which, fostering the ignorance, and the prejudices, of the Protestant, withhold him from the important investigation. Among these, one of the most injurious, and pernicious, is that constant system of insult, and misrepresentation, which, above all in this country, is, every where, and every day, directed against our religion, both from the pulpit, and the press. The *pulpit*, which should be the seat of charity, is, each Sunday, made the theatre of hostility, rancour, and falsehood. The *press*, which should be the vehicle, at all events, of justice, and moderation, is, almost uniformly, employed, as the instrument of lies, calumnies, ridicule, and abuse. What Count Le Maître has said respecting the infidel enemies of Christianity, might, with equal truth, be said of the Protestant adversaries of Catholicity: "*Je ne connais pas un seul homme, parmi ces gens là, qui soit honnête homme.*" The truth is, — Protestantism lives far more by animosity, and by the *hatred of Popery*, than by any other principle. "*In malice,*" says Dryden, "*it began; by malice grew.*" The artifice, once so useful, is still *well* understood; and *still* usefully, and very ardently, employed. Hence, of course, the aversion to our religion; and the consequent unwillingness of the public to know aught about it. "*Malunt nescire, quia jam oderunt,*" Tert.

Another cause of this unwillingness,—but directly the reverse of the preceding,—is the *partiality*, which the Protestant is taught to entertain for his own religion. When men have been born, and brought up, in any given system of belief,—be this, what it may;—when they have long lived in it, attached to it by the example of their parents, friends, and of many excellent, and distinguished, characters; when they have heard it always represented, as true; and, perhaps, never entertained one doubt about it;—where such is the case, it is, of course, difficult to reclaim such persons from their errors. But, above all, the difficulty is increased still farther, if to the foregoing considerations we suppose united, at the same time, the advantages of interest; the enjoyments of ease; and the possession, or prospects, of honours, and distinctions. Under these circumstances, men disregard the plainest truths, which would annoy them; and love the errors, which thus reward them. You may pour upon

them the blaze of the clearest evidence, and they will shut their eyes to its brightness. It was the opinion of Hobbes, that, if it were but the interest of men to do so, they would assert, that black is white; or deny, that two and two make four.—And thus, therefore, it is, that, just as, on one side, *prejudice*, so on the other, *partiality*, render the Protestant unwilling to examine the claims of our religion. If, now and then, or here and there, we do behold,—as happily we do,—a few scattered individuals, who have the courage, and the grace, to undertake the important task, they are persons blessed with superior minds,—minds, open, candid, and sincere,—which allow their reason, and their understandings, to exercise their powers; and which, impressed with the love of truth, and the desire of salvation, prefer these to all the passing interests of this world.

There are, too, many other causes besides the foregoing, which equally almost with them prevent the public from examining the titles, and the nature, of our religion. *Such*, for example, are the indolence, and indifference, with which,—absorbed in business, vice, or pleasure, men, for the most part, regard all religion whatsoever:—*such*, the notions, which multitudes entertain of the severity of our practices, and discipline,—confession, penance, &c.:—*such*, the circumstance, that, in our Church, at present, there is nothing,—no honours, distinctions, rich livings, and so on,—either to invite the ambition of the great, or to tempt the avarice of the needy:—*such*, the unhappy, and well-known, fact, that, whenever, led by the dictates of his conscience, any Protestant does become a Catholic,—straight,—so great is the general bigotry, here,—he is sure to become the object of the ill-will of his parents, friends, and relatives;—nay, most commonly, the object of their persecution. Knowing this, even the well disposed are almost terrified out of the very wish to know aught about a religion, whose profession would thus draw such awful consequences after it. From these, therefore, and such like causes, the Protestant public are deterred, in direct violation of their own principles, from examining the venerable religion of their virtuous, and brave, forefathers.

There is one other obstacle to this investigation, which, as it effects the most pious, and best-disposed, portions of the

Protestant community, it may be proper in this place to cite. It is this:—it is a very prevailing opinion among these excellent individuals, that, provided any person be only *sincere* in his belief, or in his attachment to any Church,—he is, by virtue of this amiable quality, justified for such belief, or attachment, in the sight of Almighty God. This is an argument, which we hear constantly repeated by multitudes of persons, who are alike distinguished, both by the superiority of their talents, and the piety of their conduct. However, it is, in reality, an argument, which, although thus recommended, is, very commonly, no other than a flattering illusion. It is true,—there is a *sincerity*, which, properly understood, is a very noble, and shining, virtue,—the dictate of a generous heart, and the fruit of a happy disposition. But then, it is, again, equally true, that there is, also, an order, or feeling of *sincerity*, which is not of this description. “*There is a way,*” says the divine wisdom, “*which seemeth right to a man, but whose end conducteth to death.*” Thus, the Jews were *sincere*, when they crucified their Redeemer. The pagans were *sincere*, when they put to death the Christians. Thus, in our times, the Socinian, the deist, &c., are, all, and each of them, *sincere* in the belief of their dreadful creeds, or in the rejection of all creeds. It is so, too, in regard of the various heresies, and sects,—however absurd be their opinions; or however false, or profane, their doctrines. We see the professors of these errors living on, under the illusive pretext of their *sincerity*,—easy, and contented. In short, if the argument, or pretext of sincerity, were really a justification of men’s conduct, or opinions,—there is, in this case, no crime in the records of vice; no error in the codes of extravagance, but what might be not merely excused, but justified as right. Wherefore, the plain consequence is, that the feeling called “*sincerity*” is, by no means, always a virtue; nor even an apology for error. To be a *virtue*, it should be conformable to the will of God, and be founded upon truth.

If, indeed, there be any case in which the disbelief, or rejection, of the true religion can be deemed justifiable, upon the plea of sincerity,—this can only occur, under one or other of the following circumstances,—either that the individual, thus situated, does not possess the means, or the ability, to find out

the truth ; or else, that after having employed all the means in his power,—study, consultation, prayer, &c.,—in order to make the happy discovery, he is still unable to effect it. In these cases, as his ignorance may be looked upon as involuntary,—so, of course, it is but charitable to hope, and conceive, that it is, therefore, pardonable, and devoid of sin. “ *Non tibi deputatur ad culpam,*” says St. Austin, “ *quod invitus ignoras ; sed quod negligis quærere, quod ignoras. Hoc tibi deputatur ad reatum.*” Whoever, indeed, considers seriously the character of the true religion, and how strictly its belief, and profession, are commanded,—all the securities of salvation being declared dependent upon these conditions ;—whoever considers all this, cannot but feel, that if the ignorance of the sacred institution be the effect of indolence, or neglect ;—if it be founded upon partiality or prejudice, upon self-love, interest, and so on,—it must, in all such cases, be a disorder sinful in the eyes of God, and, as St. Austin says, fatal to the prospects of future happiness. Such also, as these, are the sentiments of many of the best Protestant theologians,—of such men as Hooker, Laud, Butler, Stillingfleet, &c. These, all of them, maintain, as a general principle,—that before any one can, without sin, refuse to believe in the true religion, “ *he ought,*” as one of them expresses it, “ *to be able to produce a necessary reason, or demonstration, that he is right in doing so.*” Bishop Butler declares, that the neglect of knowledge is so momentous a concern, “ *is a piece of downright immorality.*” “ *Ignorance,*” says Stillingfleet, “ *is excusable, as far as ignorance will excuse. But, ignorance commonly is a great crime.*” Hence, therefore, again, although it may be true, that a person may be *sincere* in his errors, yet it is likewise true, that before he can be *innocent*, or excusable, in his errors, he is, at all events, bound to have studied the great questions seriously,—with that degree of care, candour, and impartiality, which are adapted to the importance, and character, of the awful subject. Without this, his sincerity is neither Christian, nor true sincerity. If these maxims are admitted, it cannot then but manifestly seem, to every thoughtful mind, to follow,—that before any Protestant can, on the alleged plea of *sincerity*, be justified for his disbelief, or rejection, of the Catholic religion, he is, at all

events, bound to have examined its claims, with serious, and impartial care. His duty, his conscience, and his leading principles, imperiously command him to do this. For, the Catholic religion presents to his attention, and respect, invitations and titles, to which no other Church can exhibit the slenderest pretension. "*If*," says Mr. Blanco White, "*the mass of Christians must submit to the decisions of another authority, by whatever name it may be called, the Church of Rome can fear no rival. You may raise doubts against its supremacy. But, how very few minds of a pious character will not be overpowered by the pre-eminence of Rome in the Christian world?*"

Hence, then, let me exhort the Protestant, who piously wishes to place the securities of his salvation upon a solid, and wise foundation, to begin, and seriously undertake, the task of examining the titles of this Church. Let him undertake it, animated by no feeling, but the love of truth,—biassed by no prejudice, nor by any worldly consideration. Let him do it, in the spirit of *humility*,—not grounding his belief upon the fallacious suggestions of his own private judgment,—which can only generate conjectures, and perhaps,—but prudently consulting that great external *authority*, which, provided for us by the divine wisdom, is the best, and the only sure, guide to the temple of Christian truth. Let him do it *consistently*,—not studying, or reading, the works only of the men, who misrepresent our religion, (this is the almost universal case with Protestants,) but the works, likewise, of those, who, really knowing it, alone represent it faithfully. Let him do this,—calling down, at the same time, by prayer, and devotion, the aids of grace, and the light of the Holy Ghost. With this preparation, and with these dispositions, he will, early, as I have already said elsewhere,—experience in himself the happy dawns of the heavenly wisdom. The brightness of God's countenance will beam upon him; and His hand will conduct him to that sanctuary, which alone is the asylum of security, the seat of unity, and the centre of Christian concord.

It would be an act of prudence in the Protestant, if, besides considering the claims of the Catholic Church, he would consider, also, the characteristics of his own. Considering these

with impartial care, he will find the following facts historically true:—first, that the *origin* of all the Protestant Churches is but a recent event,—coeval, at best, with the days of Luther,—who tells, that, “*at first, he stood alone,*”—*primo solus eram*:—secondly, that the *methods* employed for their introduction were every where, violence, artifice, and all the bad influences of the passions:—thirdly, that the *effects*, resulting from their establishment, were, uniformly, the diffusion of error, and the increase of vice:—“*Any other state of things,*” says Melancthon, “*in any other age, presents the beauties of a golden age, if it be compared with the disorders, which the reformers have introduced:*”—fourthly, that there is nothing in the *lives* of the first reformers, that can justly seem to recommend them, as the envoys of God, sent to reform the world; and to bring men back to the paths of holiness and truth. By the way of illustration of this fact,—a fact, which to every Protestant should appear of the highest moment,—I will just cite, as the most interesting specimen, *the life of Luther*, the author and soul of Protestantism. Describing the general character of this man, Melancthon, his friend, says of him,—lamenting the unfortunate circumstance,—“*I tremble, when I think of his passions. They are violent as those of Hercules, and Philoctetes.*” Indeed, speaking of these, himself, he tells us, for example, that, “*the violence of his LUST is such, as to render him almost mad with the desires of women;*” * and that “*in point of PRIDE, he yielded neither to emperor, king, or the devil.*” † These, and such as these, are not surely the virtues of an apostle. Accordingly, struck with these extravagances, it is now,—since fanaticism, and bigotry, have subsided into comparative moderation, and good sense,—it is now become a very prevailing opinion of many learned writers, particularly of those of Germany, that Luther was really *insane*. Such opinion, Mr. Hallam remarks, is, in fact, “*but natural, considering the strange tales of diabolical visions, which he seriously recounts; and from the inconsistencies, and extravagance, of his writings; their intemperance, their coarseness, their scurrility,—and their wild paradoxes, which threaten the foundations of religious*

* Coll. Mensal.

† Resp. ad Maled. Reg. Ang.

morality." In reality, did their exist no other proof, that the man was insane, save the passages which abound in his 'Colloquia Mensalia;' these alone, to any sober mind, should appear sufficient to testify the fact. They are, some of these, so gross, indelicate, and profane, as to excite the feelings, both of horror and disgust. And yet, such is the man, who still forms the key-stone of the proud arch of Protestantism.

If the foregoing facts, and considerations, do not suffice to convince the thoughtful Protestant of the slenderness of the claims of his religion to be venerated, as divine, let him, in this case, adopt, as another, and safe criterion of his judgment, those conspicuous *marks* of the true Church, which the wisdom of God has established to point it out; and which every Protestant, believing in the Nicene Creed, acknowledges as the beacons, which direct the pious inquirer securely to the blessed sanctuary. These are *the unity, the sanctity, the catholicity, and the apostolicity* of the divine establishment,—plain, simple *facts*, which the ignorant themselves may, without difficulty, examine and ascertain. Accordingly, let the Protestant examine, and honestly study to ascertain, whether or not, and how far, they appear to him to be realised, either in the Church which he believes in, or in any other Protestant Church. Examining the fact, or attribute, of *unity*, he will be compelled to feel, that there is no feature in the Protestant Churches, that is more strikingly prominent than their *disunity*,—a hundred religions, all differing from each other; and the members of each religion, all differing among themselves. Discussing the mark of *sanctity*, he cannot well but be reduced to own, that there is little or nothing in the conduct of the first founders of the reformed Churches,—in the lives of Luther, Calvin, Cranmer, &c.—that can reasonably seem to entitle them to the character of saints;—nothing in their *peculiar* doctrines, or in their discipline, that can merit the praise of holiness;—their *peculiar* doctrines,—now almost extinct,—being, for the most part, absolutely *unholy*; their discipline, strikingly relaxed. Considering the prerogative of *Catholicity*, he cannot but plainly see here, and remark, that there is *nothing* in any one of the Protestant Churches, that can possibly appear to fulfil this magnificent attribute,—their establishment, being but the work of a few years past;—

their diffusion,—that is, the diffusion of each separate sect,—being confined but to the narrow limits of some single state at best, or perhaps of some single town or province. In regard of the sacred appendage of *apostolicity*,—considering this, he must, alike, feel here again, how weak, and unsatisfactory, are the claims of any of the Protestant Churches to this grand characteristic,—the short chain, both of their pastoral ministries, and of their particular tenets, reaching only through the few trifling years since the epoch of the Reformation.

Thus it is, that I recommend it to the prudence of the pious, and thoughtful Protestant, to examine seriously the character of his own religion, as well as the claims, and the attributes of ours. His duty, his principles, and his conscience, command him imperiously to examine both. I do not say, what the effects of his research will be; but, at all events, this consequence cannot fail to result from it,—that, if, in his prejudices, he still chance to condemn, or disapprove of our religion,—he will, even in his partialities, be reduced to feel, that there is very little to applaud, or to approve of, in his own. In the Protestant, it is a great misfortune,—and an evil, which we lament,—that, whilst concerning *our* religion, he knows nothing;—concerning his *own*, he is, generally speaking, just equally ignorant, and uninformed.

THE END.

6 EE 67

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

1. **A Comparative View of the Catholic, and Protestant, Churches.**
2. **Controversial Sermons on the Marks of the Church.**
3. **Bossuet's Exposition of the Doctrines of the Church.**
4. **The Difficulties of Protestantism.**
5. **Letter to Lord —, on Transubstantiation.**
6. **Father Campian's Challenge to the Universities.**
7. **De Dominis's Motives for Returning to the Catholic Church.**
8. **Thoughts on the Rights, &c. of the Church, and State.**
9. **The Prudent Christian.**
10. **The Catholic's Prayer Book.**

PRINTED BY A. J. VALFY,
RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET.

10/3

RECORD OF TREATMENT, EXTRACTION, REPAIR, etc.

Pressmark: 3127. CCC 13.

Binding Ref No: 300884/5.

Microfilm No:

Date	Particulars
17.2.1998.	Chemical Treatment
	Fumigation
	Deacidification MAG-BI-CARB.
	Lamination 8.5 GSM TISSUE (ELVS).
	JAPANESE TISSUE REPAIR.
	Solvents
	BOOKCLOTH CLEANER.
	Leather Treatment
	Adhesives
	WHEAT STARCH PASTE.
	ANIMAL GLUE.
	Remarks
	REBACK.

CG-3



